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J. B. Rotherham

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CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

BY

JOSEPH BRYANT ROTHERHAM,

Translator of "The Emphasised Bible"; Author of "Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews," &c.

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PREFACE.

As it is sixty years since the writer of these pages preached his first sermon; and as, notwithstanding diversions to other forms of Christian service, he has continued preaching more or less frequently ever since; he hopes to be acquitted of presumption in now discussing this fruitful and practical theme.

The diversions to which he refers, he considers to have furnished him with distinct advantages, as affording special points of observation from which to view the entire subject of Ministry. Many years' engrossment in literary occupations have not failed to create in his mind a lively sympathy with such as are engaged in business and professional pursuits, who nevertheless feel it to be a duty and an honour to preach the Gospel. He knows what it is to look forward to appointments, to get fore-glimpses of subjects, to recur to them ever and anon amid the distractions of a busy life, to have faith in the power of husbanded moments, to gain sudden perceptions of logical arrangements of topics, and above all to

realise the immense refreshment to be obtained by ascending to a higher plane of thought and feeling than commerce and literature ordinarily supply. Thus, but for his rooted dislike of the invidious and unscriptural term "Layman," he might hope to be regarded as the Lay Preacher's friend.

Any resulting tendency to view the Ministerial profession, as such, with conscious independence, which might possibly border on suspicion, has been effectually counterbalanced by some insight into the arduousness of ministerial work and the prevailing nobleness of ministers' aims. It will be seen from the following chapters how far the present writer is from exaggerating the factitious element which he undoubtedly sees, or thinks he sees, in their position; and how sincerely he would be pleased to find them nursing into vigorous activity the gifts amongst Christ's people which it is their duty and privilege to foster. And though some portions of the ensuing discussion must necessarily appear fragmentary and commonplace to those who are familiar with ampler treatises on the general subject, yet does the author of this small treatise hope that even men of experience may find a sufficient amount of freshness in these pages to repay them for a candid perusal.

Undoubtedly there will be found, underlying this treatment of Ministry, certain distinctive principles which demand acceptance or rejection. There will be seen (in the first and second chapters) an endeavour to throw this age at once back on the Apostolic age, over the head of those departures in principle and practice which little by little led on to the Papacy; an ignoring of the claims of even the so-called "historic episcopate," on the ground that it has no roots in really primitive times; an assumption that the few and simple arrangements for Ministry which are discoverable in the New Testament furnish sufficient guidance for Scripturally constituted Christian assemblies of to-day; and an implied protest that the only reason why this guidance is not enough, is, that we have become encumbered with artificial wants. Because we insist on elaborate Ministerial systems, therefore we have to descend to sub-apostolic and post-apostolic ages to discover them.

Some, indeed, cut the traces of primitive precedent altogether, holding themselves free to adopt whatever form of Ministry seemeth to them good. Doubtless there is a limited area of freedom within which this policy may be legitimately maintained. Where there is no law there is no transgression.

Even Ministry must be known by its fruits. This is true. But it should be remembered that where precedent fails, principle often steps in with all the force of law. Is it or is it not a *principle*, that in the Christian Ecclesia there is no narrower earthly priesthood than that of all believers? Is it or is it not a *principle* that all Divine gifts are designed to be exercised? Is it or is it not a *principle* that the Holy Spirit was intended to be a permanent Presence, teaching and guiding the Christian assembly, so as to forbid the assumption that any One Ecclesiastical Organisation has a monopoly of spiritual illumination? Only let living Churches come face to face with living PRINCIPLES, and formal elaborations of ecclesiastical law will be rendered needless. The New Testament, thus used, becomes a book of ample, even if rudimentary, guidance.

Believing this, the writer of this book has judged it competent and enough to survey primitive precedent with a sufficiently close scrutiny to enable him to pass on at once to an elimination of those abiding principles of Ministry which our primitive documents afford. He has then (in Chapter III.) sought to apply these principles, in a practical way, to those forms of Church life with which he is most familiar

and which he believes to be in the main more Scriptural than any others with which he is acquainted. This portion of his book may occasion some surprise: it may provoke antagonism. In any case it invites what may prove to be a useful comparison of notes among students of primitive Christianity. The author ventures to ask: Whether it is altogether wise to "despise the day of small things" in regard of MUTUAL MINISTRY? If all should ever come to all in a day of revived persecution, what save this is there that would be certain to abide the ordeal? And even if such a day should never again dawn, who knows how soon a mighty passion may not seize the Ecclesia of God, under the impulse of which all factitious Ministries—all which cannot distinctly prove their right to exist by the Written Word—may be swept into oblivion? Assuredly, a valid Ministry, so long as needed, will remain—cut loose, it may be, from all reliance on temporal support.

The Ministry exists for the Church. The Church is slowly coming into existence for her ascended Lord, being designed by Him to become, when invested with resurrection glory, His agency for filling and fulfilling the Coming Kingdom and carrying it forward unto the Consummation of the

Ages. This perspective relieves the Ministry—relieves the Church—of an impossible task, namely the regeneration of the world. But the world must be *evangelised* because the Church must yet grow. The Church must grow until her numbers and her unity and her purity are such as to content the Divine Father as His gift for bestowment upon the Son of His love. When these things are ready, then will the heavenly places be cleared of the spiritual forces of wickedness which at present are enthroned there; then will Satan be cast down into the abyss, then will the kingdom of this world become that of our Lord and of His Christ. Such, according to the closing chapter of this work, is the true perspective in which rightly and fairly to view the work and the claims of "the Ministry of the Word."

J. B. R.

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I.

THE MINISTRY OF APOSTOLIC TIMES . . 5

THE LORD HIMSELF 5
THE LORD'S SERVANTS 5
1. *Apostles* 5
2. *Prophets* 6
3. *Evangelists* 8
4. *Shepherds and Teachers* 10
IRREGULAR 13
Informal 14
Supernatural 14
SCRIBES 16

CHAPTER II.

PRINCIPLES OF MINISTRY APPLICABLE TO ALL TIMES . 22

1. *The* PLACE *of Ministry is* SUBSERVIENT . . . 22
2. *The* MOTIVE *of Ministry is* NEED 23
3. *The* CONDITION *of Ministry is* ABILITY . . . 27
4. *The* VINDICATION *of Ministry is* CALL . . . 28
5. *The* IDEAL *of Ministry is* CO-OPERATION . . 32

PAGE

CHAPTER III.

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS IMPROVED MINISTRY IN THE FUTURE 88

SECTION I.—MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH . . 88

1. *Let the Church in its Inception be brought under the Authority of Christ* 88

2. *Let false conceptions of what constitutes the Ministry of the Word be relinquished* . . 42

3. *Let the Imperious Law of Edification be resolutely upheld* 45

4. *Let the Church recognise, honour and trust her Teachers* 47

5. *By Wise Arrangement let Mutual Ministry have an opportunity to show its Efficiency* . . 48

6. *Let Private Instruction supplement Public Discourse* 51

7. *Let the Wide Claims and Immeasurable Benefits of Church Edification move Christian Teachers to do their very best to make their Ministry Effective* 52

SECTION II.—MINISTRY *BY* THE CHURCH . . . 58

Sub-section 1.—THE MESSAGE 58

Sub-section 2.—THE MESSENGERS 62

Private and Public 63

The Preacher's Qualifications 64

First, as to *himself* 64

Second, as to his *object* 64

Third, as to his *preparation* 66

Fourth, as to his *voice* 68

Sub-section 3.—CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE DELIVERY OF THE MESSAGE 70

1. *Elasticity* 71

PAGE

2. *Adaptability* 71
3. *Plurality* 74
4. *Fixity* 75
5. *Combination* 76

CHAPTER IV.

THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD. 78

THE CROWN OF NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON MINISTRY (Eph. iv. 1—16) 81

1. *This passage is an* EXHORTATION . . . 83
2. *The exhortation is* IDEALLY ENFORCED . . 85
3. *The* BURDEN *of the exhortation is* UNITY . . 89
4. *The* MEANS *of unity is* MINISTRY 97
5. *The design of* SPECIAL MINISTRIES *is to secure* UNIVERSAL MINISTRATION 102
6. ALL MINISTRY *is* DIGNIFIED *by the* DESTINY OF THE BODY *ministered to* 106

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

INTRODUCTION.

MINISTRY occupies an important place in the New Testament. This is mainly due to the inspiring fact that Christ Jesus "came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister." That has stamped on ministry, in its essential significance, a dignity that can never be questioned or obscured. Christ saves from the sin of selfishness, thereby converting every saved man into a minister to others. Closely connected with this is the circumstance that, in the New Testament, many kinds of ministry are, in the original language, denoted by the same set of words. To bring this home to our minds it is worth while to transfer the Greek word in a few representative cases just as it stands in the original. To be a *deacon* of the commonwealth, to be a *deacon* at a wedding, to be a *deacon* of the Gospel, to be a *deacon* unto widows, to be a *deacon* unto an apostle —that is how it runs in the original. There can be

no greater honour than to be a deacon unto others. Christ came from heaven to act as *deacon* to us all. Such is ministry in primitive church scrolls.

Let us settle this well in our hearts by lingering for a little over the ramifications of ministerial service found in our statute-book. There is the *civil* ministry rendered to the State by those who wield the sword of authority, for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of such as do well; and, as civil government has divine sanction, the civil magistrate is "God's minister" for good (*a*). There is the *social* ministry of mutual helpfulness in the various walks of life, whether of attendants on their masters (*b*), of hosts to their guests (*c*), of disciples to their teachers (*d*), or of communities to other communities in distress (*e*); and as some of these social ministrations find large place in the Christian Ecclesia it is natural that they should reappear in this higher connection. In these and other forms of temporal ministry we discover a natural stepping stone to *ecclesiastical* ministry.

The particular Christian service now to be considered is "The Ministry of the Word," a happy

(*a*) Rom. xiii. 4. (*b*) Matt. xxii. 13.
(*c*) Luke x. 40. (*d*) Acts xix. 22.
(*e*) Acts xi. 29; xii. 25.

designation, coined for us by the apostles in Jerusalem, when, wishing to be freed from the cares of ministering "unto tables," they urged the higher claims upon themselves of "the ministry of the word"—by "the word" being doubtless intended "the word of life," "the word of the truth of the gospel," in short, the ministry unto men of the glad tidings of salvation (*a*).

The great object of "The Ministry of the Word" may be summarised as threefold—first, to *publish* the faith—proclaiming and attesting its great facts concerning Him who is its centre and sum (*b*); second, to *apply* the faith—to the life and character of each convert, with a view to presenting him perfect unto Christ as the fruit of His redeeming love (*c*);

(*a*) Acts vi. 1, 4. "The ministry of the word."] "This last phrase is probably used in intentional antithesis to the ministration of tables or of meat and drink, to indicate that the Twelve were not refusing to accept the evangelical function of ministering, but only to neglect the ministration of the higher sustenance for the sake of the lower sustenance."—Hort, "The Christian Ecclesia," p. 206. Such an "antithesis" serves to keep the lowliness of ministry well in mind. "The primary sense of *diakonos*, as it meets us in prose Greek literature generally, is a servant or slave within the household, whose chief duty consists in waiting on his master at table, and sometimes in marketing for him. . . . To Greek ears the word almost always seems to suggest relatively low kinds of offices, whether rendered (in the original sense) to a master, or (figuratively) to a state. Our word 'menial' nearly answers to the sense thus practically predominant." *Ibid.* 202, 203.

(*b*) 1 Cor. iii. 5. (*c*) Col. i. 28.

and, third, to *perpetuate* the faith—by qualifying and charging others to enter upon this ministerial work, so as to preserve, maintain and spread the saving truth throughout the world (*a*).

Keeping these great objects in view, we may profitably consider—(i), the Ministry of Apostolic Times; (ii), Principles of Ministry applicable to all Times; (iii), Suggestions towards Improved Ministry in the Future; and (iv), the Ultimate Design of the Ministry of the Word.

(*a*) 2 Tim. ii. 2.

CHAPTER I.

The Ministry of Apostolic Times.

"The Ministry of the Word" in primitive times, the creative days of Christian history, was carried forward by the following classes of ministrants:—First and foremost by the Lord Himself; then, under Him, by (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) evangelists, (4) shepherds and teachers; and, finally, though of difficult classification, by scribes.

The Lord Himself.

We reverently place Him at the head; not for the purpose of now discussing His ministry, but to keep ourselves dutifully in mind that, as on the one hand the authority of all ministry is traceable to Him, so on the other, for spirit and methods and aims, He is, to all ministers of the Word, their great Exemplar.

The Lord's Servants.

1. *Apostles.*—Amongst all Christ's servants, "Apostles" are usually and naturally placed first (*a*). Being original and authoritative witnesses of their Master's

(*a*) 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. ii. 20; iii. 5; iv. 11.

resurrection from the dead, they were all bound to have seen the Risen Lord (*a*). All, except Matthias, were personally appointed by Him. Their office virtually comprehended all other offices which are employed in executing "The Ministry of the Word." The Apostles were probably all prophets (*b*). They were certainly evangelists. And Peter expressly calls himself a "co-elder" with the "elders" whom he was addressing (*c*). All other offices were inferior to theirs; so that, although an apostle was necessarily an evangelist, an evangelist was not, simply as such, an apostle. "Apostles" naturally find place in the FOUNDATION of the Church (*d*); and there they remain. In their apostolic office they have no successors.

2. *Prophets.*—Prophets spake from God and for God. This was true of all those who were from time to time raised up in the nation of Israel; true also of those who assisted in the creation and early development of the Church of Christ. Like the Apostles they were incorporated in the FOUNDATION of the Christian Ecclesia (*e*); which of itself shows

(*a*) Acts i. 21—22; 1 Cor. ix. 1.

(*b*) 1 Cor. xiv. 6. "The specially chosen disciples had need to be prophets in order to be in the strict sense apostles."—Hort, "The Christian Ecclesia," p. 166.

(*c*) 1 Pet. v. 1. (*d*) Eph. ii. 20. (*e*) Eph. ii. 20.

the importance of their ministry. The essence of their work was that they spake by direct revelation from heaven (*a*), disclosing things otherwise unknown and indiscoverable, whether already in existence (*b*) or yet to come (*c*). One most valuable service which they rendered in the primitive assemblies was the unveiling of men's hearts, so as to impress strangers coming in with the solemn fact of the Divine Presence in the assembly (*d*). The claim sometimes put forth by modern ministers to be "prophets" can probably seldom be justified. Nevertheless, it would be presumptuous to doubt that the Head of the Church may graciously restore this great gift to His people; especially when we note that it is prominently included in the great fountain-promise vouchsafed by the prophet Joel (*e*)—a promise not yet exhaustively fulfilled. The becoming attitude towards the possibility of the restoration of "prophets" to the Church is surely that of the large-hearted Moses, when he exclaimed—

> Oh would that all the people of Jehovah were prophets!
> Yea, let Jehovah put His spirit upon them! (*f*)

(*a*) "Whose monitions or outpourings were regarded as specially inspired by the Holy Spirit."—Hort, "Ecclesia," p. 158.
(*b*) Matt. xxvi. 68; 1 Cor. xiv. 24.
(*c*) John xi. 51; Acts xi. 28; xxi. 11; 1 Pet. i. 10.
(*d*) 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.
(*e*) Joel ii. 28.
(*f*) Num. xi. 29.

But it would be well in all humility to hold fast to the condition which Moses instantly appended; and if the definition which we have presumed to give—that prophets speak by direct revelation from heaven—be correct, it would be a manifest dictate of humility to wait until this proof is forthcoming before we claim to be prophets ourselves, or concede the claim to others.

3. *Evangelists* (or "Missionaries").—As the derivation of the name intimates, an "evangelist" is "a publisher of the glad tidings." As a distinctive name, it implies such devotion to the work as to render the designation necessary, or at least convenient. The word itself, however, was common to the whole Church, which, it is important to remember, was essentially an evangelising community. It is only necessary to look at a concordance wherein the occurrences of *euangelizomai* are grouped to see this (*a*). "To evangelise" is to make known the glad tidings, formally or informally,

(*a*) The Greek for "evangelist" occurs only *three* times in the New Testament—Acts xxi. 8; Eph. iv. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 5. But the Greek word for "evangelise" is found *fifty-five* times. Of these the following will show the radical meaning of the word: Luke i. 19; ii. 10; viii. 1; Acts xiii. 32; 1 Thess. iii. 6; Rev. x. 7. In Luke viii. 1, evangelising is distinguished from "proclaiming"; and, in Acts v. 42; xv. 35, from "teaching." There is nothing official or formal in the act. It never of itself implies the formality of a "sermon"—Acts viii. 4.

publicly or privately; and yet this work could be done by one so devoted to it as to derive therefrom a distinctive name. An evangelist, as such, was emphatically "a man of God" (*a*) and "a soldier of Jesus Christ" (*b*), held accountable for conduct suited to such honourable designations. That Timothy, Titus, and others were apostolic *deputies* as well as evangelists cannot be denied, and it may well have been that their authority to "set in order" (*c*) particular communities was derived, not so much from their own office as from the position of those by whom such assemblies of believers had been brought into existence (*d*). There is nothing to show that an evangelist had right of entrance and control anywhere save among converts of his own making or in churches to which he had been authoritatively deputed. One point of importance, frequently overlooked, is that, in its relation to any particular assembly, the office of evangelist seems to have been merely initiative and temporary. Having set a church in order, the obvious thing for an evangelist

(*a*) 1 Tim. vi. 11. (*b*) 2 Tim. ii. 3.

(*c*) Tit. i. 5.

(*d*) "In all this Timothy is manifestly clothed for the time with a paramount authority, doubtless as the temporary representative of St. Paul guided by St. Paul's instructions, St. Paul himself having the authority of a founder, and that founder one who had seen the Lord Jesus."—Hort, "Ecclesia," p. 197.

to do was to pass on to the regions beyond, or to return to him or them by whom he had been sent forth. Of an evangelist, as such, becoming a permanent official in a church, holding pastoral authority over that church, we do not get a glimpse in the New Testament. Hence all controversial references to Timothy or Titus, or to the epistles written to them, grounded upon such a baseless hypothesis, are beside the mark. Timothy was not a "bishop," that is, he was not an "overseer" in a particular assembly. Neither was he an "elder"—synonym for "overseer"—but *a junior* needing to be put on his guard against the temptations of youth (*a*). This, of course, is not saying that an evangelist may not *become* an elder in an assembly; but the two offices should be kept distinct. Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus were instructions to evangelists; only dealing incidentally, *through them*, with the offices and duties of elders. Overlook this distinction, and everything may be thrown into confusion; elders may be proved to be juniors, family men to be men without incumbrance.

4. *Shepherds and Teachers* (*b*).—These are naturally two names for one office: the first being figurative; the second, literal; both plain. Neither of

(*a*) 2 Tim. ii. 22. (*b*) Eph. iv. 11.

them is an honorary title; for which, indeed, each is unsuited. The reason why there are two names to one office appears to be simply that the office is comprehensive and its duties are manifold. The idea of "shepherding" alone might have left that of "teaching" in the shade: the thought of "teaching" alone might have failed to keep in view those numerous providing, guiding, and ruling cares which the term "shepherding" so effectually comprehends. This double designation becomes all the more forcible when the Scriptural plan of a plurality of elders in every assembly is kept steadily in view; for, of course, these "shepherds and teachers" are none other than those "elders" taking "oversight" of whom we elsewhere read (*a*). Naturally, in a competent board of elders, some men will excel in general care for the flock, and others will show especial ability to instruct. With this agrees the discriminating injunction of Paul that "the well-presiding elders be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who toil in discourse and teaching" (*b*): implying the possibility of usefully presiding over the flock without devoting so much time and trouble to the work of preaching and teaching as to justify the use of the strong word

(*a*) Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5, 7. (*b*) 1 Tim. v. 17.

"labour" or "toil" to describe it (*a*). All "elders," acting as "overseers" in the assembly, must be "apt to teach" (*b*), nor can they be good shepherds without a measure of this gift, or be able to judge whether by others the flock is well fed or not; but many accomplished and congenial men may be able to do excellent shepherding work, who have not the time or the especial gift to labour much in public proclamation and instruction. Of mere "ruling elders," indeed, the New Testament knows nothing; but it does take clear recognition of special fitness for special work and makes way for its beneficent use.

Notwithstanding the opinion above expressed that the two names thus coupled together, viz., "shepherds and teachers" in Eph. iv., jointly designate one office, it is *just possible* that "teachers" were sometimes recognised who were, officially, neither "prophets" nor "evangelists" nor "elders," but *simply* "teachers" and nothing more; and Acts xiii. 1, 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29, may be held to favour that view. In reality, however, these passages may show nothing more than that, so conspicuously did the overseers of Christian

(*a*) "Not merely work, but work laboriously."—Hort, "Ecclesia," p. 196.

(*b*) 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 9.

Assemblies generally fulfil the function of instructors, that it was not uncommon to call them simply "teachers."

In any case, it must have been competent to the shepherds of any Christian congregation to call to their side "helpers" or "assistants" in any department of their multifarious duties, as well as special "pilots" or "counsellors" (*a*) to assist them to steer through every storm.

Subject to the above qualifications, it may be correctly affirmed that the *regular* "ministry of the word" in the primitive assemblies was fulfilled by the four offices already described. To express the same conclusion in other terms, we may say that every regular minister of the word was either an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist, or an elder (or an elder's teaching assistant).

That there was an *irregular* ministry of the word is not for a moment to be overlooked. This fact has already received passing notice, but must now be more fully considered. Irregular ministry of the word in apostolic days may be regarded as either *informal* or *supernatural*.

(*a*) "*Kuberneseis*, men who by wise counsels did for the community what a steersman or pilot does for the ship."—Hort, "The Christian Ecclesia," p. 159.

By *informal* ministry we mean that every one could speak for Christ as he was able. The whole Church was quick with evangelising energy. No new-born man needed a special commission before he could tell what the Lord had done for his soul. The facts of the Gospel were public property, and so, in short, the persecuted disciples went everywhere evangelising by means of the word (*a*). By the wayside, in the house, about their daily avocations—all could tell what they knew. All Christians, therefore, were evangelisers—incipient evangelists. This fact alone was ever tending to broaden out "the ministry of the word" in connection with the primitive congregations.

By *supernatural* ministry, we mean that which sprang out of the exercise of the primitive *charismata* or supernatural gifts. This exercise seems to have broken out anywhere (*b*); but we chiefly know it in its *congregational* activity. It was when the brethren "came together" that tongues were spoken, prophesyings were uttered, that one had a psalm, another a teaching, another a revelation, another a translation (*c*); and it is not to be denied that the exercise of these gifts constituted a species of

(*a*) Acts viii. 4. (*b*) Acts x. 46; xix. 6.
(*c*) 1 Cor. xiv. 26—28.

ministering the Word. But there are two things about these manifestations which it is essential to bear in mind, if we would derive from the record of them real guidance for our own time. The *first* is, that they were spontaneous outbursts of Divine energy; and the *second*, that even so they were to be kept under effectual control. As to the first point, doubtless respect for manifested Divine Presence would alone suggest, for instance, that way should be made for the exercise of the gift of healing, even in assembly, and the more so in that the healing act would mostly be accompanied by the enlightening word; or again, when an interpreter of tongues was known to be present as well as a speaker of tongues, two such answering and combining gifts would obviously constitute a claim to be heard; and especially would such a claim be felt when a new revelation of unknown importance was awaiting disclosure by a prophet; in that case, even a speaker already holding the ear of the audience might reasonably be requested to hold his peace, so that the later message might not be lost. But, as to the second point, it is at once startling and profoundly instructive that, notwithstanding the assumed activity of Divine Power, all forms of unseemliness, confusion, disorder and self-assertion

were to be sternly suppressed; and this, of course, implies the possession by some person or body of persons in the assembly of authority to suppress them. With whom such authority rested is an interesting question of detail, which, however, throws no doubt upon the obligation to maintain order even in the most gift-convulsed Christian assembly. If there were "elders" in the Church at Corinth—though it must be confessed none are named—then the duty of maintaining control would naturally fall upon them. If, however, it should be inferred that there were no such recognised "overseers" in Corinth, then it is quite conceivable that on the whole body of prophets rested the obligation to guide and restrain one another. In my opinion, the evidence (*a*) distinctly looks in this direction. To which it may be added, that the exercise of the critical faculty is distinctly commanded (*b*).

Scribes.

We *attach* rather than *incorporate* a notice of these, and that for two reasons: first, that the word in itself may indicate a function rather than an office, and so, for example, the bearer of the office of "apostle" might be his own "scribe"; and,

(*a*) 1 Cor. xiv. 32. (*b*) Verse 29.

second, that, even supposing we were warranted in regarding the term "scribe" as the title of an office rather than a mere function, we should, from the meagre evidence available, find it impossible to locate the "scribe" either in the Church local or over the Church general. In other words, we can find for the "scribe" neither an appointed place in a local assembly, as we can for "shepherds and teachers," nor a distinct office over the whole Church aggregate, as we can for "apostles."

In spite of all this, however, it is not difficult to see that, even in the apostolic age, "scribes" began to render important service to the faith; and it is easy to realise what enormous benefits have, since the first days, been rendered to the Christian cause by their means.

It is no doubt a little unfortunate that the New Testament writings start with such a number of untoward associations of "scribes" with "pharisees," as objects of blame, from the lips of our Lord, as a glance through the "gospels" will shew. And there is nothing improbable in the assumption—which indeed the authority of Jesus compels us to accept as a fact—that, in His day, the "scribes" deserved all the reproaches which He levelled against them. Nevertheless, it must have been the

abuse of their office and not its legitimate use, that our Master condemned. To feel sure of this, we have only to go back to the days of "Ezra the scribe" and to recall the zeal he displayed and the eminent services he rendered at the time of the return from Babylon; and then further to realise that, but for the scribes' work, there would have been no scriptures extant to which Jesus could appeal in support of His claims as Messiah. To crown which commendations of the "scribes'" office, we need only remind ourselves of the high honour our Lord conferred on them by His parting words to the Jewish nation: "Behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them ye will kill and crucify, and some of them ye will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city" (*a*)—noting how some of them were even to suffer martyrdom for their work.

We have admitted that "scribes" only began to be of service in the primitive age, although of course, the value of that beginning was incalculable. Still, it is a notorious fact that, for a time, in the giving of the new revelation, the spoken word took precedence of the written. Jesus Himself wrote not at all, save once in the dust (*b*); His first disciples,

(*a*) Matt. xxiii. 34.—"Corrected" N. T. (*b*) John viii. 8.

whatsoever memoranda they may have made while Jesus was yet with them, were in no haste to give their writings to the world; the Epistles came into existence, as it might have appeared, more by accident than by design, being primarily intended to meet emergencies in the primitive assemblies and in the Apostles' oversight of them. Only by degrees did the formal and cherished purpose *to write* mature itself in the minds of the first heralds of the Gospel. We can see the necessity growing and the practice becoming more purposeful as the apostolic age rolls on; as witnessed by the Epistles to the Ephesians (*a*) and to the Hebrews (*b*), the 2nd of Peter (*c*), the 1st of John (*d*), the short letter of Jude (*e*) and the Revelation (*f*). Naturally, as the original witnesses died, and the Faith spread, and precious documents were multiplied and needed copying, and as old manuscripts became worn out and required to be replaced,—so the office of the Christian "scribe" came into higher importance and wider requisition.

And so opens a chapter in the story of our Faith which is not likely to be closed while the present

(*a*) Eph. iii. 3.
(*b*) Heb. xiii. 22.
(*c*) 2 Pet. i. 15.
(*d*) 1 John i. 4.
(*e*) Jude 3.
(*f*) Rev. i. 19.

Dispensation endures. If to mere copyists we add judges or critics of the value of exemplary documents; and to copyists and critics we add translators (for what is a translator but a copyist of the sense of a writing into another tongue?) and if, to copyists, critics and translators, we further add editors and printers,—it may begin to dawn upon us what a vast company of "ministers of the Word" can be comprehended under the simple name "scribes."

But for "scribes" we should have had no Bible: in plain terms, other "ministers of the Word" would have had no "Word" to minister. And but for the conscientious, painstaking, monotonous, persevering and largely unremunerated labours of "scribes," our Bible would have been full of transcriptional errors; instead of being, as it is, the best preserved and *well-nigh* the most faithfully translated book in the world.

These reflections bridge over and connect the ministry of the past with the ministry of the future, and impose on the present a very real obligation—to which we must return. But, in the meantime, as our chorus of praise ascends to our risen Lord for the ministers He has endowed from generation to generation to minister the Word of Life to His

people and to the world, let us not be so thoughtless and ungrateful as to forget — the copyists, the custodians, the discoverers, the collators, the editors, the translators, the printers and printers' correctors who have toiled in this ministry — a mighty host.

CHAPTER II.

Principles of Ministry Applicable to All Times.

1.—*The* place *of ministry is* subservient.

This is involved in the very nature of ministry; its end is never in itself; it is always to serve a purpose. Martha ministers that she may promote the comfort of her guests. The magistrate ministers that he may maintain the well-being of the State. The Master ministers because the multitudes are sinful, sorrowing, perishing. The ministry of the Word has no independent reason for its existence. Ministry *to* a church is meant to subserve the spiritual health and activity of the church: ministry *by* a church, through her evangelists, is designed to convert others in the regions beyond to the same faith, and then to assist them in maintaining it and spreading it further.

It is most important to recognise this principle. To enter into the ministry of the Word for honour or emolument is treason against Christ. To appoint

men to that ministry to please or patronise or reward them is another form of the same sin. There is another reason for keeping this principle steadily in view, which is sometimes forgotten. Because ministry is subservient, there is not so very much about it in the New Testament. The Apostles were more concerned about *the Faith* than exactly *how to spread it.* Hence the machinery of church work and the details of the ministry of the Word are but incidentally and briefly noticed. The moral is: Let the Word to be ministered and the great ends to be served by it, receive the chief consideration. Many rules and regulations are not required by ministers who are mainly intent on doing their work.

2.—*The* MOTIVE *of ministry is* NEED.

If all citizens were law-abiding, there would be no need of the magistrate to enforce the statutes of the State. If the guests in Martha's house had required no food, or could with propriety have helped themselves, there would have been no excuse for Martha's "much ministering." If travellers wearing sandals had gathered no dust, the act of the Master in washing His disciples' feet would have been shorn of its beauty by being reduced

from a real ministration of comfort to a meaningless display of attention. This principle applies with force to the ministry of the Word. The need is pressing, universal, ever-recurrent. Children may come into the world "trailing clouds of glory," but certainly not with any knowledge of a Saviour or any sufficient equipment for the duties and difficulties of life. If, after birth and reason's dawn, human beings had been able to excogitate a gospel of deliverance from sin, the case would have been different. But as it is, and seeing that every ray of sure and certain hope has to be carried to the ends of the earth from the central Light which appeared in Palestine nearly twenty centuries ago, the constant need exists for continuous and ever widening evangelisation. Truly, then, the never-ceasing accession of individuals to the human family —every one ignorant of the Gospel at birth—should give a mighty impetus to missionary effort at home and abroad. Turning our thoughts inward upon the Church, what imperative calls to ministry reach the instructed ear. Teaching, admonition, comfort, are all needed. If, indeed, every convert were studious, if study were as easy to all as to some, if every Christian had leisure to prepare his own spiritual food, and if spiritual dyspepsia were

unknown,—then a very little teaching from others would suffice. And so with ministry's other functions. The wanderer that most needs admonition least cares to administer it to himself. The soul that is oppressed with grief might open for itself wells of consolation in the desert; but the paralysis of sorrow blinds its eyes and unnerves its hands. In short, if Christians were not so much like sheep as they are, they would need very little shepherding; but just because the comparison is so apt, the need is continually appealing to such as have fellowship with the Good Shepherd in His tender care.

Apply this principle, and what does it say? It says: Much ministering of the Word is called for, because the need is so great; formal and informal ministries are both required; paid and unpaid ministers can find more than enough to do. Few parents can teach and train their children so thoroughly but that Sunday school teachers may add most precious and welcome contributions. Paid preachers will always need that their labours be supplemented by unpaid. Public expositors will oft be compelled to leave corners of the field unreaped and the whole of it ungleaned. Self-supporting evangelists, medical missionaries and

visiting women will always be able to penetrate where others cannot enter. The principle says, moreover: That quality of ministry is wanted as well as quantity. Skill is requisite for ministering to minds diseased. Trained soldiers and intrepid are alone fitted to storm breaches into hoary systems of error. Variety, too, is demanded as well as quantity and quality. Song may convey the Gospel to hearts insensible to the usual forms of evangelistic address; and although sincerity must sternly forbid, alike all appeals to men under guise of direct address to God, and all appeals to the unconverted which, being congregational, are an inevitable encouragement to the disobedient to sing to others what they do not accept themselves, yet is there ample room for the soloist who can rise to the possibility of victoriously carrying home the story of Divine Love by means of winsome and wooing musical strains. Good pictures, again, may appeal to minds which cannot be reached by the ear; and even a blackboard skilfully handled may become electric with evangelising energy. Superfluous to add: That there is constant and urgent need for the ancient "scribes'" modern representative—the printer. Even deaf people can mostly read; and a solitary doubter may heed a

tract or book who would not be seen perusing it. It is the need that is ever crying out so appealingly for better books, better tracts, better pictures, better songs, better preachers—and more of them.

3.—*The* CONDITION *of ministry is* ABILITY.

This is too obvious to need amplification; but it is important to be borne in mind. A dumb man cannot preach; a destitute man cannot give; an ignorant man cannot instruct. There must be at least a measure of ability to meet the need. The ability may be natural, or acquired, or supernaturally bestowed; but it must exist, or there can be no real ministry.

It follows, that in selecting men for the ministry of the Word, the perception of fitness should govern the choice; or, in cases where selection by others is needless or out of place, the consciousness of fitness should be present to prompt to reasonable service. I once knew a Christian man who could be and was most eloquent in dilating on revealed truth by his own fireside, to which his hospitality drew a number of country brethren, who were wont to be regaled with a double feast; but his attempts to speak in public had proved conspicuous failures, and his brethren had wisely ceased

urging him to a form of ministry for which, however strangely, he had revealed a proved incompetency.

It follows further, that in Christian assemblies there should be no tender of office or call to service merely to please the ungifted. The urgency of the need and the incalculable loss resulting from failure to meet it should forbid all such forms of spiritual patronage.

4.—*The* VINDICATION *of ministry is* CALL.

Such call may be either inward and informal, springing from a perception of the need and a consciousness (or at least a hope) of being able to meet the need; or it may be open and outward, conveyed by others, who are called upon to judge of the competency of the invited one, and to request him to fulfil this ministry. The distinction between the two kinds of call is well illustrated by the case referred to under the last head. That privately eloquent brother who always failed in public, clearly needed no call to hold forth by his own fireside beyond the impulse of his own zeal and the gratitude of those who, with undisguised pleasure, were accustomed to hang on his lips. In the assembly it was different: probably his own quick sense of failure anticipated his brethren's decision not to

urge on him any further humiliation. Still, manifestly the right of call to congregational work lies with the congregation. To say this, is to say that every congregation has a right to choose its own ministers; and, ultimately, *it comes to that*, by the deepest principle of right. For who are the greatest *gainers* by a profitable ministry of the word, and who the greatest *losers* by an unprofitable, save the people themselves? No doubt many arrangements that are not on these lines may be justified as temporary expedients. Take one or two of the simplest of cases: one congregation plants another, which for awhile consists of young converts who know not their right hand from their left. These young converts—this newly-planted congregational offshoot—will naturally be glad for a time to accept the ministry provided for them by the parent church; though, even so, it will be manifestly wise that the preferences of the young converts shall soon be consulted, and that the development of their own gifts be not too long delayed. Or, again, if we view congregational propagation as effected by individual agency, and ask whether the man who has proved himself an evangelist, and who in point of fact can look round on the infant church as composed of his own spiritual children ought not to have a

preponderating voice in choosing men to assist or relieve or succeed him in the oversight of the assembly? we instinctively reply: Certainly. And yet, if primitive example is to guide us, its lesson would appear to be that the father of the church should place overseers in charge only on condition that those designed for the office receive the suffrages of their brethren. For if Acts xiv. 23, and 2 Cor. viii. 19 are compared, and the circumstances revealed in the former are considered, the conclusion is sufficiently clear that the Apostles guided the churches to vote for those whom the brethren themselves regarded as fittest to take oversight among them.

But, however such exigencies are met, their existence cannot be regarded as subverting the fundamental congregational principle, which in these pages is assumed to be unassailable. Many babes in Christ are by no means babes in matters of ordinary understanding and prudence. Besides, all babes may be expected to grow to manhood; and infant churches should aspire to be able to go alone. If, therefore, when churches have been but newly planted, they have even then a rightful voice in determining who shall be their spiritual guides, much more must this right be ultimately conceded.

And so, at length, with whatever delays and provisoes, we arrive at the conclusion that ministers in and to any Christian assembly should be the elect of their brethren.

Certainly, room will ever remain for spontaneous, volunteered service, for which no formal call has been made; for with new times come new needs, and with new inventions come new possibilities of service unheard of in bygone times. If these were not first volunteered, before being asked for, their utility might never be known, and the need of them never felt. It is, possibly, a little too soon to anticipate how far the telephone may yet be pressed into the work of pastoral oversight; but at any rate it is quite conceivable that a Christian man with a printing press at his command might discover a new mode of serving his brethren, in their church life, for which the Apostle Paul has made no formal provision. Let the novel service, however, be approved and accepted; until at length it becomes a recognised congregational need: then every instinct of good order would tend to bring it under the surveillance of the brethren, and the oversight of the elders, who must needs have oversight of everything congregational, if their guidance is to be effective. Thus, in due course, the outward call would be added to

the inward, and even the *congregational editor* would instinctively realise "great boldness in the Faith" by reason of the expressed approval by the brethren of his typographical ministrations. This supposed case is only one out of many which might be propounded to make the principle clear. *See the need—supply it: at the bidding of the* INWARD *call. Supply it—and win approval: thus obtain the* OUTWARD *call. Deny the right of the former, and enterprise is choked; demur to the latter, and responsible oversight is rendered an impossibility.*

5.—*The* IDEAL *of ministry is* CO-OPERATION.

Between the various kinds of ministry in a Christian assembly there should, of course, be co-operation; as, for instance, between the ministry of spiritualities and the ministry of temporalities. But, beyond this, when God blesses a congregation with more teachers than one, the ideal is, that all should co-operate according to the measure and utility of the gifts bestowed. There is a warning against becoming *many* teachers (*a*), but never a command to be *content with one*. There was in Antioch a plurality of both prophets and teachers (*b*). The Apostles appointed a plurality of elders in

(*a*) Jas. iii. 1. (*b*) Acts xiii. 1.

every church (*a*). There were in Philippi more overseers than one (*b*). And notwithstanding the repressive influence of modern church life, there might probably be found in every church of moderate size more than one man competent to teach.

Many arguments may be employed in favour of utilising all such teaching gifts. It may be asked why they exist but to be exercised (*c*). It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that several minds will more adequately apprehend the largeness and variety of revealed truth than is possible to one (*d*); and that several speakers will reach more hearts than can be touched by one (*e*). And, in some circumstances, even financial considerations may be pressed into the argument; seeing that several teachers may be able to render gratuitously an efficient amount of combined service, where funds are not forthcoming for the reputable payment of one wholly devoted to the work. On these stable grounds, it may safely be asserted that the ideal arrangement is that every Christian assembly should have A STAFF OF TEACHERS CO-OPERATING in orderly harmony and in brotherly humility and love placing their gifts, their enterprise

(*a*) Acts xiv. 23.
(*b*) Phil. i. 1.
(*c*) 1 Pet. iv. 10.
(*d*) Eph. iii. 18.
(*e*) 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

and their devotion at the service of the church to which they belong.

But the difficulties in the way of reaching this ideal are great; and many congregations have given it up in despair; while of many more it may be alleged that they have never cherished it, or that they even go so far as to scout the idea as impracticable and absurd. Let us look the real difficulties in the face.

There is doubtless the danger of painful divergence, amounting to contradiction, between two teachers or more. Co-pastorates occasionally furnish examples of this; not all of them so harmless as that recorded of Drs. Blair and Robertson in Edinburgh, some generations ago, when the former, having closed an eloquent sermon on Virtue in the morning with the exclamation, "My brethren, if Virtue were embodied the world would fall in love with her!" the latter in the evening responded, "My brethren, Virtue has been embodied, and the world crucified her!" Probably, within living memory, similar instances and others more disturbing have occurred.

The opposite danger is, that for fear of such collision between two irreconcilable strains of teaching from different lips, all sharpness of outline

should be rubbed off from public instruction, to avoid public reply on the same platform; and so scarcely any real teaching be vouchsafed. The proposal of the late Isaac Errett, of Cincinnati: "Let the bond of union among the baptized be Christian character in place of orthodoxy, right doing in the place of exact thinking," is plausible as between separate communities. But it is submitted that few Christian teachers worth their salt would concede that the connection between "right doing" and "correct thinking" is so slight as to make the latter of so little consequence. Still, it must in frankness be allowed that, if divergent lines of exact thinking came into collision on the same platform, there would be a serious likelihood of disaster.

Personally, the writer of these pages regards Mutual Ministry with feelings of enthusiastic admiration; which is perhaps remarkable, considering that, in connecting himself more than fifty years ago with churches practising "Mutual Teaching," it was not at all this feature of their worship which attracted him, but their faithfulness in maintaining the meaning of believers' immersion; considering, moreover, that he well knows, from an experience not always inspiring, how difficult it is to bring Mutual Ministry up to the standard of practical

efficiency. Still, the profound conviction in its favour, having taken root, abides, and the bright ideal remains undimmed. He thinks that theory alone could scarcely have produced such an attachment: that, half unknown to himself and half-forgotten in its detailed seasons of blessedness, there must have been going on a gradual process of glorifying the ideal; so that now, in this treatise, at the close of a long life, he feels himself irresistibly impelled to make a determined effort to do something that may *live*, to elevate the actual, and bring it nearer to the ideal. This confession is the more convenient just here, in that, by the time the reader gets well into the first section of the next chapter, he may find himself in an unwonted atmosphere. He will there observe an endeavour every pulsation of which is throbbing with the eager desire to move congregations who profess to follow it to make strenuous endeavours to reach a worthy realisation of the New Testament standard.

This said, the one thing necessary to the completion of the present chapter can be added in a very few words. Let none who are happily still in pursuit of the New Testament ideal practically ignore, or in anywise deny, the difficulties which they know so well. Let them remember: *That*

things are more than names—that work is more than office—that there can be no mutual teaching where there is no teaching—that the Lord's sheep need real shepherding more than they need a plurality of nominal shepherds — that a correct theory of Church order is far less important than the maintenance of vigorous Church life—that if we would avoid the most distant approach to hypocrisy we shall forbear to declaim against a one-man ministry until we have something better to put in its place. Let us by all means hold to our ideal; but let us put forth strenuous endeavours to render it real.

CHAPTER III.

Suggestions towards Improved Ministry in the Future.

For the present it is the local assembly that is before our minds; and this offers us a simple method of treatment, naturally bringing before us —first, Ministry *to* the Church, or *edification;* and then Ministry *by* the Church to the world, or *evangelisation.*

Section I.—Ministry *to* the Church.

1.—*Let the Church in its inception be brought under the authority of Christ.*

It is no common assembly of which we here treat; but an assembly of which Christ is to be Head, which is to be honoured with His presence, to bear His name, and to exist for His glory: a Christian assembly. It is essential, therefore, that from the outset of its existence, it should come under His sole and absolute authority. Christ will tolerate no second head over any assembly calling itself by His name. We are not at liberty to constitute an assembly to

please ourselves, and then call it a Church of Christ.

WHO has *the right to begin* such an assembly? It is of the utmost importance that a correct answer be given to this question. The answer is: Two or three disciples; that is, two or three regenerate souls. The assembly is to be an organism, instinct with spiritual life. From the first it must be a growth; and there can be no growth from a dead root.

WHO *has given this right* to "two or three disciples"? The Lord Himself—on one condition: That the two or three "come together into his name"; that is, place themselves under His authority. The record of this authorisation is to be found in Matthew, eighteenth chapter and twentieth verse: the one Divine utterance on this point:—"For where two or three are gathered together into My name, there am I in the midst of them" (*a*).

But, on the face of it, does not this passage treat

(*a*) "A generalisation of the term *ecclesia*, and the powers conferred on it, which renders it independent of particular forms of government or ceremonies, and establishes a canon against pseudo-catholicism in all its forms: Cf. 1 Cor. i. 2."—*Alford.* "If there be an emergency, a layman may celebrate as well as a bishop . . . but where Christians are, though they be laymen, there is a Church. Sed ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici."—Tertullian, quoted by *Hatch.* "Organisation of the Early Christian Churches," pp. 124, 125.

of assembling on particular occasions? That is so; but does not destroy the formative force of the Lord's words; seeing that the men who can clothe themselves with this authority on one occasion can do it on twenty occasions, and so can maintain their corporate church life indefinitely.

The formative force of the Lord's great promise here under consideration is no doubt more clearly seen by correctly rendering the preposition (*eis*) standing before the word "name" as "into" than by the negligent translation "in" (*a*); but, happily, the right apprehension of our Lord's great saying about the power of "two or three" does not rest on a single word, seeing that it must be plain to every discerning eye that the passage does more than promise the Lord's presence: it expressly conditions that presence upon the so coming together.

Again, that broad and imperative condition of Christ's presence, when legitimately carried out, will be found to have a most essential bearing on all the assembly's subsequent history, though it comes to number a hundred or a thousand members. It is its "coming together" into Christ's name,

(*a*) A very inconsistent rendering on the part of all who rightly contend for "into the name" in our Lord's last commission, as preserved in Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

that must clothe it with authority, and thereby prove to be the palladium of its liberty.

So much on the right to begin a local assembly. The position in which it places us may be thought to be radical in the extreme, and so it is; but it contains its safe-guard within itself. The assembly at its inception may be small, but it is no man's plaything. It exists to hold forth the word of life. It lives to grow. It is bound to seek enlargements. It needs the healthy aspiration to become a body with hands, feet, and all other contributory members. It needs joints of expenditure, making demands on the joints of supply (*a*). It needs the rich and the poor coming together. It needs fellowship in temporalities as well as spiritualities. It needs the power of propagation.

It can, in its feebleness, "hold the fort" against all comers. No man can extinguish it. But, as Christ's assembly, it cannot prefer to remain small. The power of its Lord is able to reveal itself more variously in a competent assembly; and inasmuch as the compassions of its Lord are wide as the world, it must needs desire the numbers and the gifts and the temporal means to extend and multiply. And it must desire a ministry commensurate with its needs.

(*a*) Eph. iv. 16.

2.—*Let false conceptions of what constitutes the Ministry of the Word be relinquished.*

There are some misconceptions so simple as to need an apology for naming them; one misconception quite obvious as soon as mentioned; and still another which is not a little specious and misleading.

Simple misconceptions. "Talk is not teaching." What truth has the talk advanced? Whose mind has it enlightened? What duty has it enforced? Who has been comforted that deserved consolation? No amount of mutual talk will make mutual teaching.

"Illustration is not truth." Illustrations "exist for the truth. They are not counted of value for themselves. That is the test of illustration which you ought to apply unsparingly. Does it call attention to or call attention away from my truth? If the latter, cut it off without hesitation. The prettier it is the worse it is" (*a*).

"Self-gratification is not the edification of others." That was probably the sense in which he that spake with tongues in the church at Corinth "edified himself" (*b*). Doubtless he felt the better for it. Nevertheless, if neither he could interpret nor anyone else, he was enjoined to keep silence.

(*a*) Phillips Brooks. (*b*) 1 Cor. xvi. 4.

A more *serious* misconception is entertained when other truth is substituted for saving and sanctifying truth. "And now I commend you to the Lord, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (*a*). There can be no substitute for the Word of the Lord's favour. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (*b*). It is of little use to preach anyone else to this end; and, if the perfecting of character is lost sight of, the grand design of the church fails of accomplishment. I know that all truth is one; but before truths in botany, mechanics, or astronomy can make me a better man, they must be related to Christ and His word; and it is a minister's business so to relate them or to let them alone.

A *specious* misconception, which is sometimes apt to mar ministerial work, is harboured *when undue dependence is placed on impromptu discourse in assembly.* The power of numbers to stimulate a speaker is frankly admitted; and the mute appeal of the upturned faces of hungry souls may occasionally embolden a man to dare that which he would not

(*a*) Acts xx. 32. (*b*) Col. i. 28.

have been self-forgetful enough to premeditate in cold blood. All this is freely recognised. But the opposite extreme is probably more disastrous. *The Spirit of God can prepare me in my study, as well as embolden me on the platform.* At least let the wood be dried beforehand, ere yet the moment for kindling it comes. The whole week has been preparing your hearers; and should it not also have been preparing you?

But perhaps the one form of this specious misconception, which, where harboured, does more harm than any other, is witnessed—when church gatherings are *based on the assumption of miraculous gifts when there is no justification for counting on their presence.* I am the more free to say this, because I have not come to any hard and fast conclusion that the miraculous may not reappear. I should count it a welcome interruption to suspend my discourse while a lame man was healed. And if revelations from the unseen world were wont to arrive while the Lord's people were in convocation, we should soon learn to adjust ourselves to the new conditions. But where can be the wisdom, where the reverence, to allow ourselves to frame our arrangements upon the supposition of *conditions which do not exist?* The Lord is mighty enough to

break in upon our church assemblies if He please. And who among us would not reverently bow to His manifested will? But all hollowness, all unreality, should be banished from our midst.

3.—*Let the Imperious Law of Edification be resolutely upheld.*

What is edification? It is upbuilding—therefore it is increase. Where there is no increase, there is no edification. Of course, it is not external, material increase. It is not even the addition of numbers (*a*). It is increase to the attainments of the existing members of the assembly—to their knowledge, their courage, their joy, their love. Something must be added to what is already there. We are not straitened in the outworking of the idea; as we may see by an apt illustration taken from the first Epistle to Corinth. For although we have not the gift of prophesying now, yet the use of that gift in the primitive church well illustrates what edification is. It was pre-eminently an edifying gift; and if we had to express the utility of prophesying in a single word that word would be "edification." The apostle says everything, when he says, "He who prophesieth edifieth the church." But the writer

(*a* Acts ix. 31.

of the epistle has already amplified the idea of edification: he has said: "He who prophesieth speaketh unto men unto edification, and exhortation, and comfort." "Edification" (more exactly understood) adds to my knowledge, "exhortation" to my motive power, "comfort" to my joy in the midst of trial and sorrow. He that can add to any one of these can edify me (*a*).

The law of edification in the assembly is imperative and universal: "Let all things be done unto edifying" (*b*). Nothing is excepted. Everything that does not edify is ruled out. No mere amusement, or display of learning, or partisanship, can stand before it. It is imperious—a law of laws. All other laws must be overruled by it. And it is the assembly as a whole, and not a mere minority, which this law respects; seeing that to edify a few is not to edify an assembly.

It may require courage to assert this law, and resolution to maintain it; for "*vain talkers*" *must be silenced.* And it may further need the grace of self-denial to decline to continue the attempt in face of manifest and repeated failure; in the face of the growing infirmities of old age, such as loss of voice and memory; aye, and in the face of the

(*a*) 1 Cor. xiv. 3. (*b*) 1 Cor. xiv. 26

growingly exacting demands of an enlarged assembly, —where the voice that once could edify the two or three can no longer edify an assembly that has happily grown to three hundred. It was the foresight of the occasional necessity for this difficult act of self-abnegation that sharpened our apprehension of the high value of the initial law of the constitution of a Christian church. When this fundamental law is reverently obeyed, and the "two or three" from the first come unreservedly under Christ's authority, the man who once could hold the reins of instruction will be prepared to yield them into abler hands. It is necessary that this should be said; otherwise a blessing may become a curse: *the blessing of free and unassuming initiative may become a mould in which shall be cast the iron bond of stereotyped incompetence.*

4.—*Let the Church recognise, honour and trust her Teachers.*

It is clear that the primitive churches recognised their teachers. They knew that some among them were teachers and others were not. "Now, there were in the church in Antioch certain prophets and teachers," and then their names are given (*a*). It

(*a*) Acts xiii. 1.

was known *who* were prophets and teachers. They were recognisable and recognised. "Are all apostles?" No; but it was known who *were*. "Are all prophets?" (*a*). No; but there were some who could be known to be such. "Are all teachers?" The same answer holds good. Therefore, there was not an "all-men" ministry, even in Corinth, where gifts abounded (*b*). "Not many teachers become ye, my brethren" (*c*). How much less may all be teachers! The teaching of a Christian assembly cannot be every one's business.

If a church is fed—is instructed—is exhorted—is consoled: such ministrations are certain to be honoured. And with the readiness to honour will come the preparedness to trust, unless that predisposition is repeatedly deceived. But there must be no breaches of faith oft repeated. Busy, hungry, struggling souls must be excused if they rather bitterly resent being cheated of what may be the only meal of spiritual assistance per week which they can hope to obtain.

5.—*By wise Arrangement let Mutual Ministry have an opportunity to shew its efficiency.*

It is not difficult to see that Mutual Ministry has several natural advantages. It secures a variety

(*a*) 1 Cor. xii. 29. (*b*) 1 Cor. i. 7. (*c*) Jas. iii. 1.

of talent adapted to differing classes and needs. It provides for a division of labour, whereby a burden can be easily borne which would be too heavy for one man unaided to carry. Coupled with this is an enviable freshness thereby ensured, which is in danger of being worn away by too deep an engrossment in the task of ministering to the same people. "I am sure," says Phillips Brooks (*a*), "that many men who, if they came to preach once in a great while in the midst of other occupations would preach with reality and fire, are deadened to their sacred work by their constant intercourse with sacred things." "It is to me quite wonderful that most of the sermons one hears are so good as they are, considering the unintermittent stream in which most preachers are compelled to produce them. I have sometimes thought, in listening to the discourse of a really thoughtful and able clergyman, 'If you, my friend, had to write a sermon once a month instead of once a week, how very admirable it would be!'"(*b*). These are weighty admissions from men speaking from experience, and I commend them earnestly to all interested; only that, for "once in a great while," in the first extract, I would substitute

(*a*) "Lectures on Preaching," p. 25.
(*b*) "The Recreations of a Country Parson," pp. 347, 348.

"with suitable intervals for change and rest." The "great while" may result in the accretion of "rust"; and the too infrequent exercise of a gift may conduce to an over-luxuriousness of fervour when its exercise is renewed. No! let the beast of burden know the refreshment coming from a removal of the yoke, but do not give him such lengthy furloughs as that he shall need to be broken in every time that he is harnessed afresh.

But there must be arrangement. Let each elder or teacher know when he will be expected to address his brethren. Let him have time to pray—to plan—to prepare; if need be, to change the subject of his address and yet be in time to meet the occasion. Little by little our stores may be overhauled and made ready for use; little by little we may become aware of new needs amongst our brethren. But, though a Christian teacher may be habitually on the alert and so ever be making indirect preparation; yet, if he is otherwise a busy man—and it is for such I write—he will be able, between suitable rests, to sacrifice time and concentrate energy—*with appointed opportunities in view*—which would otherwise be not merely unnatural but practically impossible. And when his appointment comes, not only should he feel put upon his honour to fulfil it

to the very best of his ability; but it should be regarded as downright robbery to let any inconsiderate irruption of an "all-men" ministry filch it away from him. *Let the feast provided be eaten with thanksgiving, and not be set aside in favour of unripe fruit, casually brought in.*

6.—*Let Private instruction supplement Public discourse.*

I question whether any man living can, in one and the same address, meet the requirements of a congregation of any size. Probably more than five out of every five hundred would be left by the wisest and most varied address, "like Gideon's fleece, unwatered still and dry." Why should it be presupposed that public ministration can do everything? Has the bread of life not been broken sufficiently small? Why, then, does the fault-finder himself not morsel it out to his neighbour in crumbs adapted to weakest capacity? Besides, there are ever likely to be especial cases, where the needed instruction can be in every way more successfully given in private than in public. When Apollos "began to speak boldly in the synagogue" at Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila probably shewed as much practical wisdom as delicacy and respect in

that, instead of publicly laying bare the eloquent man's deficiency in evangelical knowledge, "they took him to them" before expounding to him "the way of God more precisely" (*a*).

7.—*Let the wide Claims and immeasurable Benefits of Church edification move Christian teachers to do their very best to make their ministry effective.*

That its *claims* are *wide*, may be seen if we look at the INSTRUMENT with which it works—the word of the Lord's grace: "I commend you to the Lord, and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up." Many, I suppose, would conclude that "the word of his grace" is just the Bible. Even if it were so, it is not by thumping the Bible nor by merely rustling its leaves that a congregation is to be edified. But I humbly think the conclusion that the Bible is meant is a slovenly conclusion. The discreet use of the concordance on the term "word," especially in the "Acts," will, if I am not mistaken, shew that the new, living, and as yet mainly unwritten gospel message is mostly intended by that term (*b*). And this usage flows over into the

(*a*) Acts xviii. 26.—C. N. T.

(*b*) Acts iv. 4, 29, 31; vi. 2, 7; viii. 4, 14, 25; x. 36, 44; xi. 1, 19; xii. 24; xiii. 5, 7, 26, 44, 46, 48, 49; xv. 7, 35, 36; xvii. 11, 13; xviii. 11; xix. 10, 20.

Epistles (*a*). And therefore I think that by "the word of his grace" is meant the same thing as the similar expression in Ephesians, "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (*b*). This being so, the work of the Christian teacher is laid out for him. For it is evident that, in order to build up, he has to work out the Good News into its claims, motives, responsibilities, warnings. He has to work from cause to effect. He has—in a word which is only a fragment of a larger representation—to shoe the young Christian warrior "with the readiness of the glad-message of peace" (*c*). The same thing is admirably enjoined upon Timothy: "Preach (proclaim) the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort (or 'encourage'), with all long-suffering and teaching" (*d*). There we see the living process of transition from proclaiming to teaching. "Go back to thy proclaiming work, and draw out of it what thou needest; but work it out into motive, into conduct, into life; and urge it home in every variety of instruction and appeal." Even thus viewed, the claims of Church edification are anything but narrow.

But of course the ancient Hebrew writings find

(*a*) 1 Cor. xiv. 36; Gal. vi. 6; Phil. i. 14; ii. 16; 1 Th. i. 6, 8; 2 Th. iii. 1; 1 Tim. v. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 9; iv. 2; Heb. xiii. 7.
(*b*) Chap. i. 13.
(*c*) Eph. vi. 15—E. N. T. (*d*) 2 Tim. iv. 2.

place in the work of upbuilding, as we see from the Second Epistle to Timothy (*a*), furnishing a rich quota of instruction for every Christian assembly. Notwithstanding, they are not always easy to handle with judgment, delicacy, and insight, so as not to confound dispensations and so as to do strict justice to the Hebrew nation. While, therefore, they add immeasurably to a Christian teacher's materials, they add to his cares and tax his utmost skill.

And still the view widens. The Bible, broadly speaking, is a church's great instrument for edification. But it needs to be preserved clean and polished: freed from interpolations, brightened up and sharpened with more accurate renderings. And the question is, Who is to do this work? Where does the responsibility rest? And when done, or supposed to be done, who is to judge of the success of attempts undertaken to that end? To whom, if not to their "teachers," are Christian men to look for guidance in deciding whether on the whole the Revised Version is better than the so-called "Authorised," or whether, so far as it goes, the "Corrected New Testament" is not to be pronounced better than both? Who is to guide a church to a wise decision, if not its "teachers"?

(*a*) 2 Tim. iii. 14—17.

There are many Christians, doubtless, who, though they can see that responsibility as to these things must rest somewhere, yet easily excuse themselves from sharing it; who do not even care that their "shepherds and teachers" should concern themselves in these high responsibilities. If this vague sentiment could be crystallised into a sentence, it would assume some such form as this: That it is the world's duty to take care of the Church; and that worldly men who do not themselves desire to be edified in the Christian sense, are to be the judges of what is the fittest instrument for yielding food to living and hungry souls.

The conclusion to which this discussion surely leads is: That it is desirable that in the eldership of every Christian assembly there should be at least one who can be trusted to guide his brethren aright in the weighing of these responsible matters; and that in every large city, or, at the very least, in every country, there should be a number of men conversant with Bible transmission and translation, and who are competent to pass on the Written Word in uttermost purity to other lands and to coming generations.

Far be it from me to seem for a moment to favour the conclusion that *only accomplished literary men*

can be competent elders of Christian assemblies. Life stands before literature. Many a man of robust good sense and competent knowledge of his Bible, if only strong in spiritual zeal and discernment, may, with reasonable diligence, render himself an ornament to any board of Christian overseers on which the suffrages of his brethren can place him.

That the *benefits* of Church edification are *immeasurable* follows from all that has gone before as to its nature and aims; and may be further enforced by considering the POSSIBILITIES which it embraces. Edification in knowledge enriches for life, and a new insight into, say, the place and power of prayer, forms a fresh bond between the enriched soul and eternal things. Edification in the way of new impulse to duty may result in ever-increasing usefulness and reward. Edification in the form of consoling the sorrowful may not only enable the tried one to weather the storm of present temptation, but endow the consoled one with the power to comfort others in turn. No one, therefore, can calculate the ratio at which spiritual benefits conferred through an edifying ministry go on in indefinite multiplication.

Assume that the rich, when exhorted, secretly

respond,—can it ever be known in this world how many widows' hearts shall thereby be made to sing for joy? Yet a single exhortation did it. Assume that the ministers of the Church's bounty discover that "the ministry of the Word" has succeeded in replenishing their coffers, so that a new schoolroom can be built, so that an additional evangelist can be commissioned,—can it ever be known how many waifs, as a consequence, may be reclaimed, how many souls may be saved? "Immeasurable," truly, is the word; for, indeed, immeasurable is the motive-power wielded by those who know how by their ministry to bring their brethren's hearts into responsive touch with Him "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor."

Once more: it should be remembered that a pastoral ministry is always in its degree an evangelistic ministry; and less immediately yet not less truly a source of new evangelistic agencies. I cannot conceive of a congregation of believers being built up where there is not an ever fresh resounding of the very things that all believe. So that, as Christians do not resort to secret conclaves, and as all teaching and exhortation starts from the Gospel; as moreover the very Memorial Feast which most mightily draws believers together is a Memorial of

Salvation at its foundation-head,—it would seem to be the most natural thing in the world that the very ministry that is bent on upbuilding should at the same time result in converting. But, indeed, a well-nourished church should, in the very nature of things be a choice nursery for the growth of young evangelists. Here the young evangelising idea is taught how to shoot; here the motive forces are stored which impel to wider utterance; here the trophies are gathered which show what prizes may be won from wider fields.

Section II.—Ministry by the Church.

By the Church we still mean the Assembly of Believers—the whole company of the saved, in their individual and collective capacities: all of whom are responsible for ministering the Word of Life to the unsaved. This brings before us the Message, the Messengers, and Circumstances in the Delivery of the Message.

Sub-section 1.—The Message.

The Message is the Gospel, the Good News of Salvation: the chief characteristics of which will be brought before us as we observe that it is Simple—Ample—Vital.

1. It is *simple*. It is that, because it is a message; for we do not expect a message to be complicated. The Greek calls it a "word"; and a word is not a book. It is the word of peace (*a*), the word of reconciliation (*b*), the word of God's grace (*c*), the word of salvation (*d*), the word of the Cross (*e*), the word of truth (*f*), the word of life (*g*), a word that is like a light held forth in darkness, a word that can be passed from mouth to mouth and can run like a racer (*h*). It is simple, because it is a proclamation made by heralds; and we do not expect a proclamation to be an harangue or an argument or a discussion.

When we look into it, we find that such indeed it is: simple, after the manner of a message—after the manner of a proclamation. It can be expressed tersely, concisely, memorably, commandingly.

It can be condensed into a word: for to proclaim the Gospel is to proclaim "Christ." It can be comprehended in a single proposition: That "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It can be solidified into three facts: "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day,

(*a*) Acts x. 36.
(*b*) 2 Cor. v. 19.
(*c*) Acts xiv. 3; xx. 32.
(*d*) Acts xiii. 26.
(*e*) 1 Cor. i. 18.
(*f*) 2 Cor. vi. 7; Eph. i. 13.
(*g*) Phil. ii. 16.
(*h*) 2 Thess. iii. 1.

according to the Scriptures." It can be sung in six lines, celebrating Christ personal and Christ mystical, as He—

> Who was made manifest in flesh,
> Was declared righteous in spirit,
> Appeared unto messengers:
> Was proclaimed among nations,
> Was believed on in the world,
> Was taken up in glory.

This variety of examples of simplicity may perhaps suggest—as I think it should—that a living process of simplification should still ever be going on; that, if the Gospel is within our minds a living thing, we may be able with advantage to coin new forms of generalisation which shall simplify our message to suit the emergencies of the hour and the needs of our hearers. I cannot imagine what harm could ensue from this, provided our simplifications were not put forth as authoritative—were not always being repeated creedwise till they were threadbare—and were held strictly subservient to the Divine teachings they were intended to bring home.

2. It is *ample*. Every instance given to show that the Gospel is simple is easily susceptible of amplification. Take the single term "Christ." It is both a name and a title; a name, because it identifies the person intended by it as Jesus of

Nazareth, now glorified in heaven; and a title meaning "one anointed"; which again alludes to a fact, fulfils a prophecy and identifies a hero—alludes to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was, on a certain occasion, namely at His baptism, anointed with the Holy Spirit; fulfils a prophecy, namely in the eleventh of Isaiah, that a scion from Jesse's root should be so anointed; and identifies a hero, the long-foretold Deliverer of the Hebrew nation, so that when Saul of Tarsus, who had then become the Apostle Paul, coined the strangely conjoined terms, "A Messiah crucified," he flashed out a world of meaning for all mankind. And this is only one instance of amplified simplicity. To avoid being tedious, take only two more of the examples of simplicity already given: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Yes! but that brings with it the implied fact of His pre-existence, that He should come into the world with such a grand end in view; and the three facts of the Messiah's death, burial and resurrection, are expressed in less than two short verses. Aye! but wherefore, save that the third fact should be expanded into the fifty-four remaining verses of the massive and argumentative fifteenth of Corinthians? Simple? Yea, but withal how ample.

Practically ample also; and not merely by way of

expanding verbal exposition. It is ample in the classes whom it addresses, being suited to all sorts and conditions of men; and in the motives to which it appeals—hopes, fears, reverence, gratitude, sense of right, love of life.

3. It is *vital.* The Gospel vitally concerns every man. There is no man whom the Gospel is not fitted to bless; no man who can with impunity reject its claims. It deals with what most concerns every man: his relations to his Maker, his character, his conscience, his sins, his domestic and social obligations, his philanthropy, his scheme of life, his prospects in the judgment to come.

The above brief survey of the Message is merely subservient to what follows; for ministry and its improvement are what we have chiefly in view. The Message is ready, but where are the messengers?

Sub-section 2.—The Messengers.

In harmony with the comprehensive view of ministry which from the outset we have set before us, we are led to think first and foremost of all Christians as ministering the Gospel to their neighbours, and especially fathers and mothers as ministering the Gospel to their children. This, for

distinction, we may term the *private* ministry of the Word. Besides which there is the *public* ministry of the Word in set discourse.

Both ministries, indeed, need qualification and preparation. For privately ministering the Word, the grand fitness consists of holy lives and burning zeal; and so the endowments required for it are more or less informal. Moreover, in the very nature of things, the public ministry of the Word will assist the private. The Word fitly spoken on the platform can be repeated in the workshop and by the fireside. Probably this connecting link between public and private ministry might be strengthened to mutual advantage: to the public ministry giving clearness and point, easily remembered and carried away; and to the private, imparting a sense of able companionship and a confidence born of observing how strong the argument, how telling the appeal, already patterned and familiarised to a large assembly. "The words of the wise" are not only "as goads" to drive promiscuous hearers to their duty; but are as moulds in which other goads may be cast by those choice hearers who are, according to another view, "privates" seeking new stores of ammunition.

We may be excused, therefore, if we now

concentrate our thoughts on the public ministry of the Word; as probably the more important, but as certainly the more difficult; for, I suppose, a hundred good conversationalists may be more easily found than one effective public speaker.

In the PUBLIC SPEAKER, ENGAGED IN MINISTERING THE GOSPEL, all sub-distinctions may now, for the time being, be advantageously sunk. There may be, and there is, an important difference between "proclaiming" and "teaching"; but that need not now occupy us. There may be, and there is, some difference between an "elder" and an "evangelist"; but this does not come up here for immediate consideration. All we want is found summed up in one familiar word made ready to our hand, and well understood—the PREACHER. Let us consider, then—

The Preacher's Qualifications.

First, as to *himself*. He must be a Christian, or he cannot hope to persuade others to be Christians. The man himself is behind his message, giving weight to it, or discrediting it.

Second, as to his *object*. His general object, in an evangelising ministry, of which alone I here write, is to move men to decide for Christ. Some of his

hearers may not know, or may not believe, that it devolves on them, or is possible to them, so to decide. His business is "to open their eyes" to see that it is so; and to move them to make the decision. But many hindrances may stand in his hearers' way, and his duty is to assist in removing them. A single discourse may convert; but, more likely, at least several will be necessary. It is desirable, therefore, that a preacher should keep before himself the question, "In what way can I reasonably hope that this discourse will help to bring about the momentous decision?" The theme may be interesting, the text may be attractive, but in what way can it be made subservient to the one grand design? "When," says Dr. Dale, "you have chosen your text and your topic, how are you to begin to prepare? If your 'notes' [supposed to be made in the course of *indirect* preparation] serve you well, you will already have in hand a considerable amount of material; but whether you have little or much, you should first of all come to a clear understanding with yourself about the precise object of your sermon. *What is the sermon to do?* The answer to this question determines the whole method of preparation" (*a*).

(*a*) "Lectures on Preaching," pp. 130, 131.

3. As to his *preparation.* Any man who really cares to excel will always be making *indirect* preparation. By reading, observation and experience he will ever be accumulating material. By way of *direct* preparation, one of the first things he needs is an inspiration, to make choice of this or that as his theme; so that then he may proceed with assurance, concentrate his thoughts, look up his references—and let all simmer. The initial preparation should be begun in good time, so that the mind may have space to work freely on the materials already gathered, and be saved from panic through apprehension of failure in the tentatively chosen line of things, with no time left for another choice of theme, text, or handling. Such a freely working mind will get glimpses—snatches, insights; and by experience will learn that a few such momentary intuitions are more than equal to as many minutes of fully expressed speech. Such discovery—which frequently has to overcome a habit of inveterate unbelief—will prevent the very common fault of accumulating too much matter. Whether beforehand in writing, or at the time of delivery in extempore speech, the surplus should be resolutely thrown overboard: which really means nothing worse than its reservation for future use. There

are, of course, links that are essential to the strength and persuasiveness of an argument; but as a rule any mere loss of symmetry in a discourse had better be incurred than that accumulated material be crowded in to the perplexing, if not wearying, of the hearer. Moreover, undoubtedly—as Dr. Dale strongly advises—the matter should rule the method; the divisions be left until you see what there is to divide. Then, as to writing sermons beforehand, although no universal rule can be dogmatically laid down, yet experience has some sage advice to give. A few may even read their discourses with advantage; a few more may *occasionally* read them to profit; but the majority will do better to go no further in this direction than to read a specially prepared paragraph now and again, which it is conceived may, if openly and carefully done, contribute much to the restfulness of the discourse, to the checking of a too great impetuosity of delivery, to the relief of the hearer, and to the enhanced effect of the resumed spontaneity of utterance. The crowning consideration which strongly makes for evincing the immense value of extempore address, arises from an estimate of the comparative time taken in writing out a discourse. If, by acquiring the power of extempore public

speaking, that time can be saved and devoted, say, to more thorough Bible study, what a command of the Holy Scriptures may not that economy of time in a few years secure!

4. As to his *voice*. The most careful preparation in the world may fail for want of voice, or may miscarry through serious misuse of the vocal powers. It is perfectly true that interesting and valuable public addresses may exert a mighty influence in spite of defects in the instrument of communication. But, on the other hand, many a hearer may be retained (in the open air), and drawn indoors to yield a willing ear up to the end of the discourse by the spell of a good voice well used. There must at least be no serious failure of voice, if the Gospel is to be publicly proclaimed with success. Hence the following very elementary observations may not be out of place.

The *first* thing needing attention is that the voice should be suitably *pitched*, and *projected* well forth into the building in which the audience is gathered. Every word from the outset should be distinctly audible by all present except the deaf. Subject to this urgent condition, however, the pitch should be rather below than above the medium of the vocal compass which is at the speaker's command, so

that the voice can either rise or fall at will and gather force as it proceeds (*a*). The *second* desirable thing is that the speaker should hold back a sufficient reserve of vocal strength until he is nearing the end; since nothing is more undesirable than that an audience, already—without implying blame anywhere—a little wearied with listening, should—by the perception that the speaker is getting exhausted—be incontinently tempted to wish the preacher were done. Many a battle is lost, not only through failure of ammunition, but through the weariness but for which the final assault might have been victorious. The *third* requisite is that the voice should be naturally used, for then there is sure to be some music in it: the conversational passages being expressed with a little more dignity than is needed in private talk; and the more declamatory portions, however vigorously delivered, never for a moment raising an apprehension in the audience that the speaker is losing his self-control (*b*).

(*a*) "It is wonderful how difficult a speaker finds it to lower the main key on which he has fairly started. He may become aware of it in three minutes, and make repeated efforts to correct the mistake, but in most cases he will fail. . . . The great matter is to avoid beginning wrong."—Broadus, "Preparation and Delivery of Sermons," p. 492.

(*b*) "The voice should very rarely go to its highest pitch, or to its fullest volume; there ought to be always a reserve force, unless it be in some moment of the most exalted passion. Long passages

In restraint there is power. As Phillips Brooks says in a slightly different connection: "Let the truth go out as the shot goes, carrying the force of the gun with it, but leaving the gun behind" (*a*). Lastly, all sustained shouting, all harsh rasping, all startling explosions of sound should be religiously avoided as beneath the dignity of the claims we plead and as certain to cause annoyance and resentment in the minds of those whom we are anxious to win.

The following homely rhymes from Dr. Stalker's "The Preacher and his Models" may be of service, if judiciously applied:—

"Begin low;
Proceed slow;
Rise higher;
Take fire;
When most impressed
Be self-possessed;
To spirit add form;
Sit down in a storm."

Sub-section 3.—Circumstances in the Delivery of the Message.

What we desire here to secure is just a glance at those accessories of time, place, arrangement of

of bawling, relieved only by occasional bursts into a harrowing scream, are in every sense hurtful to all concerned."—Broadus, "Preparation and Delivery of Sermons," p. 493.

(*a*) P. 120.

service, singing, and so forth, which may go far to make or mar the success of the ablest and most thoroughly prepared preachers.

Evangelising Arrangements.

1. *Elasticity.* Our Lord and His Disciples preached anywhere; and so may we. They embraced occasions as they arose, and so may we. They largely used the surprise element, breaking in where least expected, improving a passing incident, and the like, and we might employ that element more frequently than we do. But we must have the men that can do it; and they must have their message ready. I believe that a sense of pious duty to undertake outdoor work, largely needs replacing by the conscious possession of a burning message, impelling to delivery.

2. *Adaptability.* There is, if I mistake not, too great a propensity on the part of religious people to go out into the open to hold a service to their own satisfaction, instead of subordinating their movements to the one purpose of reaching the indifferent. In the open-air, people are absolutely free to come and go as they please. Song is attractive; but if too much time be devoted to it, there will have come and gone individuals and little groups of individuals

who may, in the aggregate, have amounted to scores or hundreds to whom no express word has been spoken. Besides, many passers-by can stay five minutes who cannot stay longer. It is infinitely desirable that something pointed and complete in itself should be said while they wait, which is adapted to grip. I once knew a clever, zealous Christian man who could tell where to find crowds; and who was accustomed to adventure among them alone, armed with nothing but tracts and half-a-dozen distinct little discourses on his fingers' ends of about five minutes' length each in delivery; having spoken one of these, he gave away his tracts, which, being distinctive, were received with avidity; passed on to another point, delivered another short speech, scattered more tracts; and so on. He was no orator; but I can be sure that every one of his discourses had in it power to bite. That example, modified, gives us an ideal for out-door preaching. Let your ablest men undertake the task. Let there be no singing unless it can be maintained efficiently. Let opportunities for speech be detected with eagle-eye by those in control. If you have a speaker able to hold a crowd—subject to that freedom of departure spoken of above—let him take the hint to roll four or five short sermons into

one, so that each group and each individual leaving shall have heard something to carry away (*a*).

After all, it is indoors that our countrymen prefer to hear weighty discourses, whether on scientific, political or religious subjects. Here, again, adaptation must rule—freedom of ingress and egress; with not the slightest compulsion to pay; good singing, held in resolute subordination to the evangelising end in view. The effective reading of suitable short selections from the Bible, and the offering of brief prayer, may also be urged; and be coupled with the suggestion that, if "helpers" are called upon to conduct the preliminary service, the best helpers should be preferred, and should be prepared for the acceptable execution of their part; and that, when young assistants are permitted to discharge these important duties, they should deem it an honour, and seek to acquit themselves not merely with credit but so as really though unostentatiously to further

(*a*) Since writing the above I have been delighted to find the same thought thus expressed by C. H. Spurgeon :—"To dwell long on a point will never do. Reasoning must be brief, clear, and soon done with. The discourse must not be laboured or involved, neither must the second head depend on the first, for the audience is a changing one, and each point must be complete in itself. The chain of thought must be taken to pieces, and each link melted down and turned into bullets."—"Lectures to my Students." Second Series, 1893, p. 89.

the great purpose of the address that is to follow. Something may be said in favour of a preference that one voice—one personality—should be before the audience from beginning to end. Where there is no law there is no transgression.

3. *Plurality.* Undoubtedly, in the direct work of delivering evangelistic discourses, there is much to be said in favour of a larger following our Lord's own example of sending forth "two and two." The advantages are obvious; but there are some drawbacks. A generation ago it was a living tradition how admirably Cobden and Bright wrought together in their Anti-Corn-Law campaign: Cobden with his calm and lucid expositions of political principles; followed by the impassioned John Bright. But the call for agreement between two men thus labouring, in the evangelistic field, is sufficiently urgent, and, in theology, the realisation of it is sufficiently imperfect and rare, that, unless the part taken by the two is quite diverse as in the cases of Moody and Sankey, Torrey and Alexander, the advantages of such close co-operation are not so easily and generally obtainable as one could wish (*a*). Perhaps, after all, this difficulty is inherent in the solemnity of the issues involved, and in the

(*a*) See *ante*, Chap. II. 5, p. 34.

tendency on the part of hearers themselves to be exacting as to the precise cast of theological outlook on the part of those who are to lead them to salvation. The whole question deserves very serious consideration; but pending its solution there is some fitness in considering the legitimate play of the principle of fixity that yet claims attention in the adjustment of pastoral and evangelistic ministries.

4. *Fixity.* How far can we concede the principle of fixity in favour of the ministry, in one place, of one man? I am prepared to concede to it everything but principle. Provided a plural eldership and mutual ministry according to gift be conserved for the church, *as a church*, there is no length to which I am not prepared to go in obedience to the divinely approved impulse to become "all things to all men" for the sake of "saving some." By all means let those preachers who can draw crowds do so, provided they teach what is divinely bidden, and aim to make MEN of us and not hold us in pupilage all our lives. Subject to the same principle, where on a smaller scale the continuous labours of one preacher are more likely to lead men to Christ than the interposing of several, by all means let us meet the public in the line of their

own preferences, and let one voice hold them until they have made the great decision. A higher voice than man's will thenceforth control their lives.

5. *Combination.* So far, I have not felt the need of raising the question of the combining of churches for the purpose of sending out evangelists. In itself, the problem is not difficult. Where one congregation is not able to sustain an evangelist or missionary in a new field, home or foreign, there appears to be no law against two or more congregations uniting to do what one could not do alone. And if two assemblies may so unite, I know of no reason why two hundred should not; and so evangelistic or missionary societies be formed. That there is no formal authority in the New Testament authorising and controlling such missionary combinations is evident. Outside individual congregations like that at Antioch, we have no pattern to follow. The one central authority we do discover is that of the Apostle Paul himself, who was evidently the centre and soul of ceaseless movements of an evangelistic kind. Even he does not appear to have wielded despotic authority. He seems to have had about him a band of willing helpers over whom his influence was so great that he could almost send them to and withdraw them from given points at his

pleasure. But it was a thing of gradation, as we see from the measure of independence asserted by Apollos, whose desire was not at all to go to Corinth when Paul not merely wished but strongly urged him (*a*). Of course, such personal authority dies with the man who wields it. If any single man can exert a similar influence now, there seems to be no valid reason why he should not. No man can legitimately claim more authority or exert more influence than God has given him. But, clearly, in all voluntary movements, all just rights should be respected. The individual who submits to dictation has himself to blame. The congregation which submits to coercion acts a treasonable part towards its only Lord and Head. All despotic centres of control are to be deprecated as in contravention of the essential willinghood with which Christ inspires and endows His people.

(*a*) 1 Cor. xvi. 12.

CHAPTER IV.

The Ultimate Design of the Ministry of the Word.

Before closing this discussion it is important to confront the question, "What is the Ultimate Design of the Present Ministry of the Word?" We have seen its *immediate* purposes to be: To publish, apply and perpetuate the Faith of Christ, so as to convert sinners and to perfect saints; in other words, to win to the faith and to build up therein. But what may we expect to be the issue of all this? Is it the Completion of the Church, or the Conversion of the World?

The writer of these pages has long been convinced that the former, and not the latter, is the correct reply. But the question should be clearly understood, and the answer be a little expanded. The question should include the element of time, and run thus: "What, during the present dispensation, is the great end of the Ministry of the Word?" And the answer should very thoughtfully and lovingly embrace the world, so far as this: "That the end

of this ministry is so to Evangelise the World as to Complete the Church." Not that the world is then to be simply given over to the evil one; but rather to come up for judgment. Not that the individuals of the world are meantime left to do as they please about receiving the Gospel. On the contrary, momentous results must needs follow their attitude towards the Word ministered, some of which may only be realised in the Great Hereafter. We are only speaking of the present realised results, when we say that the designed end of the present preaching of the Gospel is to Complete the Church as the Body of the Christ.

This statement, thus guarded, harmonises with the urgency of the work of evangelisation which has been earnestly maintained throughout the foregoing pages. *The world has to be evangelised even though it be not converted.* Disciples have to be made along or throughout all the nations; for so, with the late Charles Stovel, the present writer understands the Master's great commission as preserved in Matthew xxviii. "The Gospel of the kingdom" has to be "proclaimed in all the inhabited earth for a witness unto all the nations, and then will have come the end" (of the Lord's absence and delay to set up His promised

kingdom) (*a*); and it is devoutly to be wished that all missionaries at home and abroad may feel the burden of this prediction to be so weighty as to forbid that the witness to the coming kingdom should be merely concealed and implied in what is sometimes distinctively called "the Gospel of God's grace." It is all of grace, and the witness has to be borne; and therefore—ceaseless, boundless evangelisation is as urgent as the need of the earth for her Returning Lord can make it.

Meantime, God is "visiting the nations to take out of them a people for his name"; and the Ministry of the Word is the great agency for doing the work. The "great agency"; but Divine Providence leads the way, and the ministry of temporalities finds large place. Open doors have to be sought; men to enter them to be found; ships, camels and railways to be engaged; languages to be learned; translations to be made; books and tracts to be printed and put into circulation; and witnessing assemblies in all the world to be planted. So that it is manifest that, for a work so various and extensive, all kinds of ministrations, temporal as well as spiritual, do find ample scope. With financial means, with prayers, with trained and devoted sons

(*a*) Matt. xxiv. 14.

and daughters—all can help. The entire growing Body of the Messiah can in a thousand ways contribute to its own increase: until its Head is content—having won this priceless acquisition out of the present evil age—to go forward into the next dispensation; which, in turn, will move mightily forward towards filling all things with the fulness of God.

The reader who has thus far sympathetically followed our reply to the question, "To what end this ministry of the word?" will scarcely be surprised to find that the writer desires to conclude his book with a brief "study" of a passage in the Epistles which more comprehensively than any other in the Bible brings all ministries into unison. He refers to Ephesians iv. 1—16, which, as the crown of all New Testament teaching on Ministry, he ventures to set out in full, in the most accurate and adequate form his hand can attain; with the request that it receive serious and prayerful attention.

THE CROWN OF NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON MINISTRY
(Eph. iv. 1–16) (*a*).

1 I exhort you, therefore,
‖I' the prisoner of the Lord‖,
To walk |in a manner worthy| of the calling wherewith ye were called;—
2 With all lowliness and meekness,
With longsuffering,
Bearing with one another in love,

(*a*) A section which rings with the proclamation of the supreme Christian unities."—Hort, "Ecclesia," p. 161.

3 Giving diligence to keep—
The oneness of the Spirit in the uniting-bond of peace,—
4 One' body and one' spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling,
5 One' Lord, one' faith, one' immersion,
6 One' God and Father of all—
Who is over' all, and through' all, and in' all.
7 <To each one of you> however, hath favour been given,
According to the measure of the free gift of the Christ;
8 Wherefore he saith—
<Ascending on high> he led captivity captive,
And gave gifts unto men.
9 Now this, *He ascended;* what is it,—save—
That he also descended into the under-parts of the earth?
10 |He that descended| ||he|| it is who ascended over-above all the heavens,
That he might fill all things.
11 And ||he|| gave—
Some, indeed, to be apostles,
And some, prophets,
And some, evangelists,
And some, shepherds and teachers,—
12 With a view to the fitting of the saints
For work of ministering,
For upbuilding the body of the Christ;
13 Until we all advance—
Into the oneness of the faith, and the personal knowledge of the Son of God,
Into a man of full-growth,
Into the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ;
14 That we may |no longer| be infants—
Billow-tossed and shifted round with every wind of teaching,—
In the craft of men,
In knavery suited to the artifice of error;
15 But ||pursuing truth||—
May |in love| grow into him in all things,—
Who is the head, ||Christ||,—
16 Out of whom all' the body—
Fitly framing itself together,
And connecting itself,
Through means of every' joint of supply,
By way of energising in the measure of each single part—
Secureth the growing of the body
Unto an upbuilding of itself in love.

1.—*This passage is an* EXHORTATION.

It may be startling to call this extraordinary passage an "Exhortation." Yet that is exactly what it is, in both form and substance. It is, of course, an exhortation sustained by teaching—teaching which rises to the most lofty idealism; but its hortatory purpose is maintained throughout. Its first word is "I exhort" (*parakalo*); its last word is "love." Its drift is duty (*a*). It will be helpful to remember this leading characteristic of the passage; for thereby we shall be restrained from hardening any part of it into a creed. We shall, for instance, find within it an outline of existing unity; but that outline was not primarily intended to furnish an authoritative delimitation of the essentials of unity; as much as to say: "Unless you possess all these characteristics of oneness, you are in no sense one." The initial word is not "I certify" or "I warn," but "I exhort." To bear this in mind will also prevent the reader from getting entangled in the details of application. For example: we are

(*a*) "The great passage which gathers up seven unities of Christian faith and religion is but accessory to the exhortation to 'give diligence to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace'; in other words, to maintain earnestly the moral and spiritual basis of true Church membership."—Hort, "Ecclesia," p. 283.

here warned against continuance in spiritual babyhood; and our first impulse is dutifully to apply the caution to ourselves individually. That is well; but it is not well, if we infer therefrom that the "manhood" immediately before mentioned is mere individual manhood. Reading up to that point, properly, from what has gone before, will place us at a much higher altitude; it will lead us to the conclusion that it is the manhood of the whole body of Christ, and therefore corporate maturity, church growth unto church completion, that governs this part of the passage. This large conception being well grasped, it will be easily realised that it is just because the corporate body of the whole church is necessarily composed of individuals, that the moulding spirit of the whole becomes the moulding spirit of each; and so the fact that the spirit of the whole is one of manhood becomes an appropriate and potent argument against every species of infantile weakness. The ideal is in close touch with the real throughout: what the ultimate body will be, each local body should aim to be; and what the local body aims to be, should be the aspiration of every individual composing it. Yet not in isolation can the individual become mature; for note how the argument of the apostle

finally and decisively returns to the "body," "all" the "body," all the body whose head is Christ.

2.—*The Exhortation is* IDEALLY ENFORCED.

We have already caught a glimpse of this fact; but we shall do well to pause on it for a few moments before coming to closer exposition, as thereby a right standpoint for correct interpretation will be more likely to be assured. The circumstance that this Exhortation finds place in a Circular Letter is itself congenial to the comprehensiveness of its contents and their applicability to the whole church in its entirety, as a spiritual community destined to attain completeness and to be adjusted to unique service in "the ages to come"(*a*). Its central position in the Letter well suits the strength of motive-power with which it is introduced, and the prolonged summons to duty in all its practical ramifications by which it is followed up. The pathetic second reference to the writer's imprisonment with which the Exhortation is actually commenced, urges attention to its appeal upon the roused finer feelings of its readers; for how could Christian men turn a deaf ear to such a writer's summons to a worthy walk? The conduct which

(*a*) Cp. ch. ii. 7; iii. 10, 11.

the Exhortation begins by enjoining is the most beautiful in temper and aim that can be conceived. The initial unity which it hastens to commend to scrupulous preservation is a "unity of spirit" which glorifies all the forms by which it is to be guarded. This central unity immediately radiates into the seven detailed unities of which it is composed, not one of which can be withdrawn without fundamental and irreparable loss. These seven unities, ideally complete in number, though at first sight they seem to be rather immethodically introduced, are speedily seen to resolve themselves into an order most exquisite. For although, when historically viewed, it might have seemed that the "one hope" should have been mentioned first, as the winsome and arresting note of which a man hears "in the word of the truth of the gospel" (*a*), and by the mighty spell of which he is "saved" (*b*), yet from another point of view its position as *third* in the series is perfectly correct. For, to the approaching observer, the "body" is that which first arrests attention; and then the "spirit" which animates the "body"; and, thirdly, the "hope" which moulds the "spirit." Presently the same studious observer is instructed that the

(*a*) Col. i. 5. (*b*) Rom. viii. 24.

"body" which has such a "spirit" on fire with such a "hope" is only a "body"—whose head is in heaven, its one only "Lord" risen and ascended. Concerning this "one Lord," the learner discovers what is the "one faith," in its simplicity and distinctiveness, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Confession of this "faith" naturally leads to the next and most decisive step, even acceptance of the "one immersion," which is distinctive both in act and intent, and stands alone in contradistinction from all merely ablutionary immersions, and from all modified applications of the symbolic element of water: distinctive, not only because its implied twofold movement of *im*mersion and *e*mersion are elevated into impressive symbols of the burial and resurrection of the Lord Christ (*a*), but also because, being by Divine authority specifically accepted with a view to the remission of sins (*b*), it naturally and necessarily becomes an assurance of the same, and thus constitutes "one immersion" all the world over, speaking one language to the eyes of men, however widely their Babel tongues may differ. No wonder that, when this point is reached, the apostle should have felt moved at once to throw himself and his

(*a*) Rom. vi. 3; Col. ii. 12. (*b*) Acts ii. 38.

enumeration into the arms of the one God and Father of all, not hastily, but with such deliberation as to permit him to idealise the Father's own relations to his children as threefold, namely, "over" all and "through" all and "in" all. Truly this is idealism triumphant: yet not the close of it; for the sweep of this sevenfold unity having been sketched in this wonderfully complete manner, the next movement of thought is to rise through the lavish bestowment of gifts by the Head of this unique Body upon its members up to a special idealisation of the present position of the Head Himself. Having descended lower than the surface of the earth, even into Hades, taking possession of the world of the dead, He then ascends higher than the highest heavens; and it is in celebration of the attainment of that dignity that He grants the priceless gifts unto men, which are then enumerated in a fourfold ideal perfection, as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherds and Teachers. Here, as will be perceived, the writer proceeds from the highest dignity to the lowest, and at the same time from the less abiding ministry to the more abiding; seeing that, when Apostles are gone, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherds and Teachers may remain; when Prophets also

disappear, still Evangelists may plant new churches and Shepherds and Teachers be needed to train them; and, finally, when Evangelists pass on to the regions beyond, the Shepherds and Teachers must needs continue at their posts watching over their flocks. All, in fact, is well ordered and complete, until at length we reach the contemplation of the well-nurtured Body itself of the ascended Lord. In this Body it is at once seen there can be no dead or atrophied members, but every one is viewed as receiving and passing on the life-stream from its Head; the administered grace being mutually carried forward to its consummation: the preparedness of the Christ-and-his-Church Community for its destined activity in the age to come. It is by patient observation of all this lofty idealism, that everything is seen falling into its fitting place; and, in particular, that Unity is discovered taking the head, and Ministry following as subserving it. Yes! Unity is ideally subserved by Ministry: that is the true relation between them—of which let us make quite sure, and then a more rapid progress will reward us.

3.—*The* Burden *of the Exhortation is* Unity.

This becomes clear beyond question as soon as we more closely examine the paragraph. We are exhorted

to keep the unity already possessed; and then, later on, to strive after a yet higher ideal. The unity already possessed is displayed in verses three to six; and the higher ideal is summarised in verse thirteen.

Some readers stumble at the outset by resolving "the unity of the Spirit" into mere unity of sentiment, not observing that, "unity" being "oneness," "the oneness of the Spirit" is by the apostle himself immediately declared to consist of the seven "ones": "one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God and Father of all." Where these are preserved—the apostle teaches us—there "the unity of the Spirit" is preserved: where any of these is lost, "the unity of the Spirit" is broken. To preserve it unbroken is the burden of the writer's exhortation.

In point of fact, however, that unity has been broken for centuries—as anyone may see. The "one body" is not to be found; the "one spirit" has been lamentably torn and enfeebled; the "one hope" has been dimmed and rendered uncertain, so that scarcely two expositors interpret it alike; and the "one faith" has been resolved into a complex system by some, and variously particularised by others; while as for the "one immersion," it has been nearly abandoned in Western

Christendom, and in Eastern Christendom been changed into an essentially different rite.

But suppose for a moment the broken unity were restored, what, according to the apostle, would be the next duty? Plainly, to keep it. To this end, all lowliness, meekness, long suffering and forbearance would be needed; and that, partly because of the very diversity of the gifts of Christ to His people. These are at once the danger and hope of the Church: the danger, as apt to foster rivalries; the hope, as designed to promote unity. On this brighter side let us for a little dwell.

Christ's gift to His people of special ministries is designed to promote self-help; self-help to foster mutual growth; and mutual growth to consummate the closer unity of mature corporate life.

The initial unity of verses three to six cannot be preserved, in the manner and by the cultivation of the graces enjoined, without promoting the higher unity of verse thirteen. For by the very exercise of the virtues named, our oneness is necessarily intensified: we come to know Christ more perfectly; we gain in numbers, in knowledge, and in grace. And so the whole body of Christ, growing in stature, is better fitted for His ultimate purpose; is more and more able to receive and communicate His fulness.

This glance at the twofold aspect of unity here set forth by the apostle reveals the pain and peril of the present situation.

The initial apostolic unity is broken: ought it not by all means to be restored? Yet who will hearken to us if we faithfully plead for it? Whose ears will not be closed the moment we name the "one immersion"—even though, almost without exception, *that* is admitted to be merely a faithful translation of the apostolic word? And how is it likely that the "one faith" will be simply and strongly enunciated, until it is once more welcomed from the lips of all candidates for baptism? And the one initial and inspiring hope—how circumscribed and selfish it appears, until the Return of the Lord is held to be essential to it, and itself is regarded as introductory to His long-promised Kingdom.

The higher ideal of unity to which the apostle so strongly urged his brethren to press forward, does indeed utter a trumpet call to "advance," but the louder the note the more are we embarrassed by its summons. For the terms of it are, "Until we all advance," and the question comes, Who are the "all"? May those be included who have violated the "one immersion"? Is it rational to count upon the attainment of the higher ideal of unity

until the initial unity of apostolic times is made good? Of what use is it for professed leaders of unity to cry "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," when by this third term they intend divergent and even opposite things? How is it that so many of those who would heal the wounds of Christendom slightly, fail to realise how sturdy and enlightened are the consciences of those whose protesting voices they can never hope to silence? Let them restore the "one immersion," which is not a thing of degree, but a positive Christian institution of clear, ascertainable form, and most gracious substance. We shall then be able all the better to compare their "hope" with ours, to ascertain whether it is sufficiently comprehensive to afford us the satisfaction of a uniting fellowship therein, or whether it is a mere phantom hope, scarcely if at all based on the promises of God. We shall also be the better able to compare their "faith" with ours, to discover whether it possesses the prime requisite of simplicity, fitting it to form "the good confession" uttered by the mouth of barbarians as well as Greeks, unwise as well as wise, when they apply for baptism. By the time we have advanced so far, it may well and happily come about that a good many separate "bodies" may, like kindred drops, have been mingled into one!

This presentation of the case, as it appeals to the judgment of many immersed believers, causes keen regret, not because of any misgiving as to its legitimacy, but because we know how unwelcome it will be to many whom we love.

If, indeed, the seven elementary unities of this great apostolic exhortation had been delivered as a hard-and-fast creed for all time, then our duty would have been clear, however painful might have been the irreconcilable attitude which it would have enjoined on us. A short and sharp utterance of "No surrender" would have been incumbent upon us. But we have not so learned Christ. We dare not sacrifice the spirit to the letter. Having wittingly started on this exposition by reminding ourselves that what here offers itself for our guidance is an "Exhortation"—not a Creed—we feel compelled to ask, "What is the *spirit* of the exhortation? What is the *great principle* involved in it?" Is it not manifestly this, "Keep the unity you have, and reach forth to higher?" Applying this to our sadly altered circumstances, what line of duty does this principle mark out for us? Does it not say, "Tenderly, scrupulously preserve the unity which remains, however broken it is, however demonstrably some items in the elementary apostolic unity have

been lost, and seek to advance, starting from where you are"?

We cannot dogmatise. We cannot with authority declare precisely what path towards re-union we ought to take. To do that, we should require a recovery of the lost gift of prophesying, which is the same thing as to say we should require a direct revelation from God, expressly adapted to meet the difficulties of the problem.

Pending or failing such restoration of the prophetic gift, we must do our best to approximate to the will of our Head. And in asking what He would have us do in the emergency, we feel justified in asking a question which some may deem presumptuous—What is our LORD HIMSELF doing? What is His attitude towards those who have departed from the elementary unity of His body? In no supercilious spirit do we propound this inquiry. We are willing humbly to assume the possibility that—although we are unconscious of it—we ourselves may have done something to violate the unity or perpetuate the divisions of His church. Still, we feel bound to press it as at once a vital and practical question—What may we venture to believe is our Lord's own attitude to His divided followers? Judging—not, perhaps, as the world

judges, but—under the best light He has given us, our conclusion is this: *That while He reproves us for our divisions, at the same time He pities us, knowing what a heritage of confusion and bewilderment we have received from past generations; and that, although He could do much better for us and with us if we were united, yet does He not by any means deny us His presence in the outworking of His providence and the inworking of His Spirit.* We therefore conclude that He will be best pleased if we feel and act as BRETHREN towards those who have, in our eyes, most egregiously departed from His will as we understand it, provided always we can believe in their sincerity and in the spiritual presence of our Lord in their midst.

Hence it is *with* them, and not *without* them, that we desire to respond to our Master's call to "advance."

We clearly see that our Christ requires that "His body, the church," should be a full-grown MAN; and therefore we can no more think that any "little body" will suffice Him than that He will accept of "many bodies" instead of "one."

In no case, however, have we lost faith in Him. We know that He is able, among all bodies, to discover them who are His. Out of the Real He

can at any time call forth the Ideal; especially as all sleeping saints are in His hand, and He well knows how to bring them forth to the light; how to blend them with His accepted living saints; how to wipe away all traces of division from the united host; how to demonstrate to the wondering eyes of the world that His Father had never for a single generation failed to make all those "ONE" who truly believed in Him; how to show that the reality of the uniting process had never proved ineffective, and that it was only the manifestation of it which had lingered. All this, as an alternative possibility, we do most steadfastly believe.

But further we cannot go. We cannot be sure but that our Lord intends to take another course in order to fulfil His word and glorify His Father: intends to delay His Return until we are ready for it, to wait until we have overcome our divisions. And, therefore, surely we had better keep our eye steadily fixed on duty and remember that His word here is: "Be One! Advance! Keep what you have! Seek more!"

4.—*The* MEANS *of Unity is* MINISTRY.

This is deeply ingrained into the entire Exhortation. Christ, the Head, ministers to His members,

to make them one with Himself and with each other. The special official members are given to serve their brethren—of course to the promotion of the same end. The unofficial members minister one to another, ever drawing nearer to each other in the degree to which they get nearer their one Lord. And so, ultimately, the whole body secures its own uniting growth: "Unto an upbuilding of itself in love."

Without for a moment losing its subservient position in the Church, ministry penetrates this whole paragraph. It is implied, though not named, in the first verse; for, if those addressed had been "called," then someone must have called them; and the act of calling was ministry. The result of ministry is seen in the fourth verse; for it was the ministering of the "call," which formed the "body" and led to its being animated with the same "Spirit": "Even as ye were called in one hope of your calling." The "hope" is enshrined in the "call"; and the "call" initiates the "body" and moulds the "spirit" which is to animate it. Weaken the "hope," therefore, and you weaken the "call"; weaken the "call" and you weaken the "body" and the "Spirit" has less truth at service with which to work. Hence are manifest the honour

and responsibility of those who minister the call. Again: the special ministries of verse eleven serve to equip the saints for the mutual ministering of verse twelve. Mutual ministering conduces to the closest interdependence between all the members. Need and supply, acting and re-acting, possess an inherent force to knit the individuals forming the corporate body into a living whole; for the need of some evokes the compassion of others, and the supply by some of the need of others calls forth gratitude from the assisted ones and sympathetic praise from all.

This function of ministry of all grades to promote unity throughout the whole body of Christ, is as searching and suggestive as it is undeniable. Because this is the function of ministry, it follows that all ministries of every grade should be true to this high design. In fact, it would be scarcely wrong to generalise by affirming that when divisions are rife ministers are mostly to blame; and on the other hand, under ordinary circumstances, ministers can do more than others to restore unity. Of course, it is not always thus. Healing ministries are often blessedly successful in composing differences and healing incipient divisions. On the other hand, if ministers are not on the alert to read the signs of the times, and fail to rise to the moral grandeur of

the self-denying work of lowering party-walls, they must not be surprised if the flocks under their care grow impatient of the narrow penfolds in which they have been too long held, and incontinently seek wider pastures.

But progress, in order to be well-assured, must be well-considered. There must be no daubing with untempered mortar: no violation of pure consciences. "To speak the truth in love" being the approved method of progress, the real problem is how to keep love aflame while the needed truth is being spoken; for we need the faithful manifestation of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and it is confessedly no easy thing to utter unwelcome truth with perfect freedom from asperity and uncharitableness: how much more difficult a thing to hear it patiently when it smites ourselves! In point of fact, we cannot bear it all at once: our guides on the way of return to unity will need often to turn round and "change their voice" towards us, praising and blaming with wise alternation. And some teachers, whom the Lord has made strong to bear the brunt of the battle, may have to incur heaviest reproach for saying the most needed things as soon as ever the right time comes for giving them utterance.

Let us, however, meantime keep well in view the ideals of uniting ministries. If we have erred in the past, let us do so no more. Can the following pointed observations be gainsaid? The aim of all evangelists (missionaries, home and foreign) should be to make Christians, neither more nor less: not partisans, not men "true to our principles," as they say. We have no right to any principles other than purely Christian principles; and as soon as the need is felt to call them distinctively "ours," then, the probability is, sectarian influences are already at work. The same holds good of shepherds and teachers: their one aim should be to nurse and equip men to be simply Christians, not sectaries, not party-men.

It is to be feared that not a few ministers are guilty of keeping up party-walls—of training sectarian consciences; and that in many cases the people love to have it so. It would be an unwelcome task to specify the party shibboleths that are household words in nearly all religious circles; and the attempt to allocate them might be unjust in detail, and so do more harm than good.

The great need is an awakened conscience, and a passion to exorcise the spirit of partyism. To this end sacrifices must be made, and the conviction be

deeply lodged that, only in proportion as unity is cherished as an object worth suffering for, can ministers be absolutely trusted so to sink themselves as always to promote unity, and not division: always to seek the maturing of their brethren, and never to encourage their continuance in helplessness and dependence.

5.—*The Design of* Special Ministries *is to secure* Universal Ministration.

This is so clear in the Greek that the wonder is how any translators can have missed it. The result is secured by several devices in the original. *First* by the change of preposition from *pros*, "with a view to," to *eis*, "for." The previous special ministers have been given by Christ "with a view to" the fitting of the saints "for" ministering work; "for" upbuilding the body of the Christ. *Second*, by the use of a special word for perfecting; which, not being a term to signify absolute perfection, but fitness for an end (as the mending of nets, not to make them in every sense perfect, but to adapt them to catch fish), the thought runs plainly and securely on: Special ministries have been given by Christ, "with a view to the adapting of the

saints"—"*adapting*" *of the saints for what?* The very word "adapting" raises expectation of something to follow, stating design; and so, without so much as an obstructive comma to bar the way, a changed preposition picks up the special thread that we may be told at once what the saints are to be "adapted" for, or fitted to do: "With a view to the adapting of the saints for ministering work." That is, "the saints" themselves, as an entire class, are called on to do "ministering work"; and Christ would "fit" them to do it. *Third*, by dropping the definite article from before both "work" and "ministering"; so that, instead of being "THE work of THE ministry," it is simply "work of ministering" or "ministering work"; that is, any work of ministering, any work whereby one Christian may serve another to his upbuilding in the faith. To say here, in English, "for the THE work of THE ministry" is apt to mislead the unwary; and I am glad to see that both the "Revised" and the "Corrected" New Testaments do something to obviate the wrong impression of officialism which is made by the "Authorised" version, but which is so thoroughly out of place at this point in the passage; and that both "Weymouth" and the "Twentieth Century" make it abundantly clear

that, according to the true sense of the text, all special ministers given by Christ are designed to equip ALL HIS PEOPLE to serve one another to their mutual upbuilding (*a*).

If the ultimate breadth of ministry here intended, as bringing into service all gifts, all endowments, all useful activities, is borne in mind, no confusion of thought will enter. That all can minister is not to say that all can teach or preach publicly: some can scarcely teach at all, even privately; scarcely at all set forth ideas in luminous words so as to instruct others. And yet they can minister: can serve others with gentle ministries of love and patience and enterprise, which shall really strengthen their brethren. Hence, when this passage tells us that special ministers are designed to fit all saints for ministering work, our minds very properly take in the whole wide sweep of Christian service, for which impulse and training are needed. To such impulse, to such training, how can any bounds be set so long as human needs continue? And where is the ministration, of any kind, for which equipment is

(*a*) "Ministering is the one universal function of all 'saints' all individual members of the Church, the common element of all functions."—Hort, "The Christian Ecclesia," p. 285.

"Those more conspicuous functions were meant to train and develop analogous functions of ministration, in each and all."—*Ib.* 162.

not desirable? where the arduous service for which treasured motive-power is not required? Along lines such as these the thoughtful reader's mind is led until it distinctly perceives the cogency of the argument: That the "guides" of an assembly should *guide* their brethren into the innumerable paths along which may be discovered those good works which God has beforehand prepared for His saints to walk in (*a*).

All ministers should be self-renouncing, self-forgetful. Nevertheless, "there is that scattereth and yet increaseth"; and hence it must be needless to add: That special ministers are never more likely to be in request than when they resolutely seek to render others independent of their aid. A healthful ministry secures an active body, and an active body is likely to be a growing body; and, the more an assembly grows, the larger will be the number of uninstructed and untrained members who are brought under culture, the more anxious will be the oversight-work which shepherds and teachers will find to do; and the more numerous will be the openings made for evangelistic operations.

(*a*) Eph. ii. 10.

6.—*All Ministry is dignified by the* Destiny of the Body *ministered to.*

The destiny of the Church as the Body of Christ is —to serve as the means by which its Head will fill all things. This conception is so great as to be in danger of being lost by its very greatness; and by the want of a framework of dispensational truth within which alone the words are likely to assume a definite meaning. Given, however, an insight into the Biblical development of the ages, and as a consequence the foresight of a dispensation to succeed this, in which Restored Israel shall come into her promissory rights in the coming Kingdom of her Messiah; given also, concurrently with this, a perception of the peculiar calling of the Church as the Corporate Body of the Messiah, concerning which the ancient prophets had nothing explicit to tell, the "sacred secret" of the formation of such a Body having been concealed from those foregoing ages; then the exact place which the glorified Church is intended to fill becomes apparent, and the destiny of the Church is invested with a lustre all its own. And when that lustre is seen, the words become fraught with uttermost significance as we go on to speak of the destiny of the Church as being that of becoming the means

whereby the Christ is waiting to fill all things—yea! all things in the coming Kingdom, all things in the New Heaven and New Earth. The Church must needs be *glorified* before she can be fully equipped for this amazing work; and her preservation from spiritual intoxication consists in her resolutely observing this condition of safety. She is not ruling over the world yet: only learning, by lowly obedience, how to rule. She is not glorified yet: only suffering, and learning to suffer, that in due time she may be glorified in immortal honour with her risen Lord. Therefore, she does not confound herself with the Israelitish nation, nor go to the Old Testament to steal away promises which in their entirety do not belong to her; though, no doubt, she may be pardoned for finding there some faint adumbrations of her unique future glory.

At the same time, though resolutely declining to forestall her destiny by assumptions of present world-power, yet her high calling penetrates her very being, and her character—virgin though it be—is being moulded by her mighty hope. She is to be used of her Lord, by-and-by, to fill all things with a literalness of which she would not dare dream but for her profound faith in the destiny of her Lord Himself, who intends to bestow

upon her the immeasurable honour of sharing it with Him.

And this discovery it is which—when we are prepared for it—flashes itself upon us from a single line in the splendid Exhortation before us, namely the last line in the tenth verse, which sets before us the final intent of Christ's ascension—"That he might fill all things." For the sense runs on from this point with a simple "And" of utmost significance. "And"—that He MAY fill all things—that He may have a corporate Body WHEREWITH to fill all things—that He may have a Church, an elect and select Assembly of glorified saints, BY WHOSE MEANS He may fill all things—"He gave some to be Apostles," and so on. That single "And," by implication, attaches the Body to its Head in the fulfilment of the great design. TO FORM THAT BODY is the work of all special ministers and all saintly ministrations.

And is it not enough? Not enough, that every soul that can now be saved may become a king and priest in the coming Kingdom! Not enough, that every convert may become part of the fulness wherewith the Son of God shall fill all things, and show to oncoming ages what He meant by the surpassing riches of His favour in graciousness upon US!

Not enough, when this hope shuts up no man's compassions from the lost—turns back no missionary from pagan lands—whispers to no preacher that he makes too few converts to compensate for the labour bestowed!

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,, DEVOTION	39
,, MYSTICISM	39
,, SERMONS	40
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